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# THREE SUCCESSFUL GIRLS.

BY

JULIA CROUCH.

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# DEDICATION.

To

## MY FATHER AND MOTHER,

WHOSE AFFECTION FOR ME, AND INTEREST IN ALL MY PLANS, HAVE NEVER FAILED; TO MY BROTHER AND SISTERS IN THIS WORLD, AND IN THE WORLD BEYOND, AND TO THE DEAR OLD HOME WHERE WE HAVE ALL LIVED AND LOVED AND BEEN HAPPY,

**This Book,**

WITH TENDER AFFECTION,

*IS INSCRIBED.*

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# THREE SUCCESSFUL GIRLS.

## CHAPTER I.

### WASHING DAY.

"Here, Mary, is the last of this tubful. Tuck them into the boiler, please, and put a stick of wood into the stove.

"How red your face is, Kate! Don't work over that hot suds any longer now, but help me rinse these clothes in this cold water."

Hannah said this one charming Monday morning, the summer before she found herself in New York city.

Washing day may be considered an unfavorable time to introduce young ladies in their home; but in this case it is pardonable, as I am aware that my three girls never appeared to better advantage than on this day, and were never in better spirits, or enjoyed themselves more intensely.

Monday morning is generally considered one of the bugbears of domestic life, and is looked forward to with dread and dislike, an unnecessary but lamentable fact. However, this was not the case with the Windsor family. There was no day during the whole week pleasanter or more enjoyed. The great copper boiler on the stove had a cheery, rather than a dismal look.

The tubs, washboard, and other implements of washing placed in pompous array on the old shady porch made everybody laugh merrier, and step about with nimbler feet. No hired washerwoman ever came around to put restraint on the busy tongues that had so much more to communicate on this day than any other. Hannah, Kate, and Mary took the washing into their own hands, and left mother with the general housework; for she was not over strong, and had done enough hard work in her life, the girls declared, to warrant her a little rest. They were not remarkably early risers, which fact made known may be a detriment to them in the eyes of many farmers; but this was in part owing to the somewhat peculiar notion of their mother, that youth needed plenty of sleep, and one was not necessarily lazy who took a pleasant nap in the morning. Therefore it often occurred that neighbor Dyke's clothes-line had a few fluttering white garments pinned to it before the Windsor wash was commenced; and the girls would espy them, laugh good-naturedly, and often hold a conversation something like the following: —

"Come here, girls, and look across the field! I should think Sally's wash was half out, certain, and ours isn't commenced," was the very common remark of one of them.

"The clothes look white, too," Hannah would say; "but, dear me! Sally doesn't enjoy it at all, and I dare say she hardly gives herself time to eat her breakfast."

Then Kate: —

"It is a day of 'tremendous jerks,' Adonijah says; 'everything tubs, and hot water, and soft soap, and Sally in a fret and a worry, and nothing but crumbs for breakfast and dinner.'"

"I like our way best," says Mary, "because we have such a splendid time; and I'm sure we find as much leisure as Sally, if we don't get up quite so early in the morning."

"Sally makes everything hard work, and seems to think the beauty of life — if she thinks it has any beauty — is scrubbing floors white, etc. We try to combine work and pleasure together, and I think we succeed very well," Hannah remarks; and so they chat away merrily.

I shall give a description of one washing day, which is similar to all the rest, and proves that even this much abused and dreaded day may be made pleasant and enjoyable. There they are, all three of them, on the porch in the midst of washing implements; no crinoline — short calico dresses, displaying little stout boots and clean stockings; arms and hands gleaming white, for somehow these girls *would* have white hands, in spite of all their housework; and, above all, smiling, intelligent faces, and the busiest tongues, that kept up such a continual clatter that a person hearing them at a distance would be impressed with the idea that a half-dozen magpies were somewhere in the vicinity. To say that no gossip entered into the conversation would be a ridiculous thing to say of three merry young girls, who went to meeting on Sunday; but gossip, though it entered in largely, was by no means the chief topic.

"There!" said Kate, "if this suds doesn't look for all the world like that heap of clouds yonder!" straightening herself over the wash-tub, and looking first at the bubbles of snowy suds, and then up at the sky.

"What a comparison!" said Hannah, "soap-suds and floating clouds!"

"That is only combining the ornamental with the useful," said Kate; "and when I'm at work, I want to find as many beauties in the labor as possible."

"You'll find all there is to find, you little matter-of-fact," said Mary. "I wonder if Sally ever thought of her soap-suds looking like the clouds."

"Doubtful," said Hannah. "Clouds receive very little of her attention, I'm thinking, except when they threaten to bring rain, and sprinkle her clothes more than is desirable. Yesterday, as I came along a little distance with her from church, I remarked that the sky appeared unusually attractive. She turned up her face quickly, scanned the whole heavens, and then said, 'I do hope it will be pleasant to-morrow, so I can get my clothes out; for last week I was obliged to leave them in the rinsing water till Tuesday morning. I had a mind to ask her if nothing ever really pleased her eye or tickled her fancy, but I didn't."

"Well, I do pity Sally," said Kate; "I don't see how she can have any real enjoyment; for, really, if I couldn't see beyond my work, if I couldn't live above it, I mean, I should be perfectly miserable."

"Why, no, you wouldn't," said Hannah; "you of course wouldn't enjoy what you do now, but you wouldn't have any taste or idea of it, and therefore wouldn't long for it or miss it. Sally is happy enough in her way; but it cannot be the best or highest way, I am sure."

"I don't see what ails Sally, to be so entirely regardless of beauty and abstract ideas," said Mary. "Adonijah is more appreciative than she is, and he often makes some original remark that causes me to feel like bursting out into laughter; but I never dare to even smile, he is so sensitive."

"He can combine the ornamental with the useful quite as well as Kate," said Hannah. "Here is an apron for you to starch, Mary. That strawberry stain positively never will come out, for I gave it a dangerous rubbing."

"Mother can get it out easy enough," said Kate; "can't you, mother?" she asked in a louder voice.

Mother was in the kitchen, but she went and looked out on the porch.

"What is it that I can do?" she said.

"Get the strawberry stain out of my apron," said Kate. "Adonijah brought me a bunch of wild strawberries yesterday; and before I knew he had any, for he carried them behind him, he put them right into my apron."

"Just like Adonijah," laughed mother; "he wanted to surprise and please you at the same time; but the stain will come out easily by pouring hot water upon it."

"So I thought," said Kate, as she flung a snowy skirt into a white clothes-basket. There was silence for a short time, and then Hannah said abruptly, "Twenty dollars! what is that? only a drop in the bucket."

"However, it's five more than fifteen," put in Mary understandingly.

"And it only lacks five of being twenty-five," said Kate.

"O, that's all plain enough to be seen; but because it's more or less than something else don't make it anything but twenty dollars," said Hannah; "and what will twenty dollars do?"

"Why, it is a heap of money, and will do a good deal. It will pay your fare to New York, and board you quite a little time," said Mary encouragingly.

"Yes, quite a little time, sure enough," said Han-

nah, smoothing her brown hair back with her wet hands, and leaning against the great blue tub. "Mamie is such a little goosie, I do believe she thinks twenty dollars would board me half the winter; but I know something about how money goes in cities. You might keep a dollar at home here six months, but a dollar in New York would vanish away before one was aware. Don't you believe it, Kate?"

"Well, I suppose we should have to pay for everything in New York, and that would be different from what it would be at home; but we might be economical, and not make a purchase at every peanut stand we come to," said Kate.

"I like peanuts most dreadfully," said Mary, "but I'd no more spend a cent of my fifteen dollars for one than I would go a-begging. What are peanuts in comparison to music?" Mary had been exercising, and her cheeks were very red as she stood in the door that led from the porch to the kitchen, with her thumbs in the bib of her apron, and her eyes sparkling. The girls stood up and laughed merrily, and Mary joined them, but said, after the laughter had somewhat subsided, —

"Well, I don't see what you are laughing at, after all. I mean that I wouldn't spend my money for sweetmeats. I think it's foolish, don't you, mother?"

"Mary thinks she has advanced an original idea," laughed Kate, "and goes to mother for sanction, when it is just what mother has always taught her."

"I think you all understand the sweetmeat subject pretty well; but how is it about useless articles of dress?" said mother.

"Mary must answer that," said Hannah. "You all know I never trouble myself with such things."

"I think a charming little hat, trimmed in French pink rose-buds, would tempt Mary before the peanuts would," said Kate.

"Who was it that was longing for a black silk velvet dress and a diamond ring last night? *You* know, Hannah," said Mary a little triumphantly.

"Well, I should think that was the height of extravagance," said mother, looking at Kate, and laughing.

"Well, it was of course," said Kate, "but I was only referring to the time when I shall be rich, and then it won't be extravagance. I hardly think my twenty-five dollars will help get it."

"Perhaps such fancies do no harm," said mother, "but I don't think a velvet dress would make you feel any happier than your white lawn one does, that you have just washed so nicely."

"I guess it would," said Mary; "for she said yesterday it was getting to be so old and thin, she was ashamed of it" —

"Mary is a little tell-tale, there!" said Kate, blushing and laughing. "I'm not really ashamed of it, but I was thinking I would like a new one. There! here is a basket of clothes to take to the line: who'll go with me?"

"I will," said Hannah, "if you'll pass me my sun-bonnet and gloves. Now, Mary, you take those clothes from the boiler while we are gone, and have them ready to rinse when we get back."

In long sun-bonnets, and gloves with half of each finger gone, together the girls lifted the clothes-basket, and bore it out to the long clothes-line, beneath which the grass was fresh and green. Talking busily and earnestly, they pinned the white garments one by one

to the line, and the June breeze swayed and folded and unfolded them; and the sun, yet in the east, flung warm rays upon them, and made them as white as snow.

When the last garment was gone from the basket, the two little washerwomen sat down under an old pear-tree near, and with their feet in the cool grass they plucked at the daisies and clover, and talked earnestly.

"I *must* go," said Kate; "I must learn something. I am old enough, — as old as Daniel Stearns was when he went away from home, — two years older; and he is a rich man now. Shall I be a silly girl, and sacrifice the mines of knowledge I might explore? Shall the mere fact that I am a girl keep me from being what my heart yearns for?" The black eyes flashed. Firm lines settled around the red lips, as Kate changed her easy, idle position, and sat stiffly looking into her sister's face. "I have always been sorry that I wasn't a boy," she continued; "but because I'm a girl, I won't be a ninny. You may take note of that, Hannah."

Very serious note was taken of it by Hannah, who tore the crimson clover-tops in pieces, and pushed her long bonnet a little back from her face. "O, dear Kate," she said, "if we only could go! If we were sure it would be best! *You* must go, Kate. I am sure you have talent, and here it will be cramped, and at last lost from sight. Take my money with yours, which, with that you expect to make before fall, will keep you a few months at least, and go to New York. We will all help you, and you can go comfortably."

"No," said Kate, shaking her head, "not a cent of your money when you are as anxious to go as I. Be-

sides, money would not do me half the good that yourself would, and you must go with me."

"It would be pleasanter," said Hannah, "but it takes twice as much to support two as one. And then Mary never would stay at home if we should go."

"Yes, that is just what worries me a little. Mary is so enthusiastic on the subject, and I don't think she realizes the hardships we must endure; and then what can she do if she goes?"

There was a sudden spring behind the girls, a little sudden laugh, and Mary darted between them with her hands full of clover, which she tossed into their laps and faces.

"I've heard what you said about me, you lazy washerwomen, sitting in the shade while the sun is almost at the noon point, and the wash not out. You undoubtedly would have sat here till sunset without your dinner or supper, if I hadn't come to break up your slanderous conversation. I *shall* go to New York, though; you may have as many sly talks about it as you please. I have got fifteen dollars toward it, and I can do as much as you can."

"I wish you had stayed away a while longer, Miss Eavesdropper; but as you have forced your company upon us, we will not mind you, but keep on with our talk," said Hannah. "I don't know why Mary can't stay at home this winter; she isn't but eighteen and a half. By next winter, you know, Mary, we shall be accustomed to the city; and then it will be so much easier for you. Only think what a time we'll have with you tagging us about, homesick and discouraged, hungry and everything!"

"Tagging you about!" said Mary scornfully. "I'll do no such thing. I'll take care of myself, and I shan't

get any more homesick, discouraged, or hungry than you will. Pooh! I guess I'm not quite a ninny, and I can live on crackers a good while; I like them."

"How are you going to pay for your music lessons?" asked Kate.

"Father'll give me the money. He will give all of us some, and I shall get a few scholars, and live quite respectably. I *shall* go; I've settled it thoroughly in my mind. So don't waste your time trying to persuade me differently. *I* have no idea of being persuaded; but if we remain idle much longer, the wash won't be through till dinner time. There comes old Dan Pike and Maurice. I wonder where they're going to."

The girls took more dignified positions, and brushed the clover from their aprons as the rough old farmer and his son passed along through the green yard. "You're a-takin' it easy, gals, takin' it easy," said Daniel, in a voice which sounded much like the bark of a little spaniel. "Wal, I've no adjictions to't though marm to hum keeps the gals there a-trottin' smartly, then she scolds 'em case they don't get no more literary knowledge, like some of their neighbors; but I tell her how't they don't get time. A dryin' day for yer close, but the sky looks a leetle too rainy to warrant us dry weather long."

Daniel didn't cease his heavy tramp as he relieved his mind of a thought or two, without giving the young ladies in the grass opportunity to reply. Maurice, full six feet tall, with his face burned and tanned, blood-red to the roots of his sandy hair, tramped on behind his father with a nod of his head, and a grunt of recognition. The girls were silent until they had well passed by; then Kate said, in low, musing tone, —

"They think we are lazy. Don't you know what Mrs. Daniel said about us? Maurice is the greatest tell-tale made, and he will tell all over the neighborhood about our lying on the grass Monday morning. He'll be sure to say lying."

"Let him tell then," said Hannah. "I think we can manage our own affairs, and I guess we have a right to manage them as we please."

"He was pretty short to-day, wasn't he?" said Mary. "You see I snubbed him yesterday. Conceited fellow! His father has got a good deal more sense than he has, and that isn't saying much. He's the chap that said I wasn't fit for a wife, but could only sit up and pound on that great 'pianner.' Ever since, I've taken every opportunity to snub him."

"I think we have 'taken it easy' long enough now; let us hurry and finish our work. I want to see if I can make that gate look any better in my sketch," said Kate, rising, and taking the clothes-basket.

They went back leisurely to the porch. The smell of savory meats came stealing out from the kitchen. They worked a little livelier than before, pounding, rubbing, and rinsing, but talking as busily as ever.

"This is the last," shouted Hannah, after a little time, as she tossed a garment which she had been starching into the basket. "Three cheers, and honor to ourselves! Only eleven o'clock; plenty of time for clearing away things, making our toilets, and eating our dinners. All through, mother."

"You have been very smart, and had very good luck," said mother; "and now, mind you, don't sit in the wind and take cold, but bring in the clothes that are already dry."

"Nothing goes 'contrairy' to-day," said Mary,

"only you girls don't want me to go to New York with you; but I shall, and I was careful of my gray poplin this spring, so I could have it for my travelling and street dress. I shall go in to see Madame Demorest, when I am there; not to employ her, of course, but because I want to see how the woman looks who designs such elegant toilets."

"I opine that you'll find something else to do, besides looking up a lady so little necessary to your happiness," said Hannah.

"How high-flown and prudent you are!" said Mary.

At the dinner-table were three shining faces, not heated, or anxious, or disturbed, but placid and satisfied; and with appetites sharpened by pleasant labor, they partook of the palatable food before them, each declaring in her own mind what had been a settled fact with them years ago, — that mother was the best cook and the best mother in the world. Adonijah, who had come over with his great yoke of oxen to give father "a lift" about "breaking up" a piece of new land, thought that his hands must be all thumbs, or his knife and fork had the very "deuce" in them, as they "slid around like eels," and his fork at last dropped on the floor with a hot potato attached to it. By this time his face had become very red, for he never once lost sight of the fact that three pairs of bright eyes belonging to three young ladies were taking note of his awkwardness and confusion. Hannah, however, though like the rest, inwardly convulsed with laughter, helped him to regain his composure.

"Never mind that potato, 'Nijah. Here's another and a better one. Didn't you find stones plenty in the north field to-day?"

"Plenty? by — yes, thick 's hail-stuns. I thought the plough-nose must smell danger there one while."

Of course, this speech allowed everybody an opportunity to give vent to their feelings, and the laugh went round.

After dinner, before going back to the field, Adonijah took occasion to slip into Kate's hand a small roll, tied with a black thread, saying in a tone which meant to be a whisper, but which could be heard through from the porch to the sitting-room, "It's the meetin'-house. I made it yesterday settin' on an old stump in the brush paster. I haven't showed it to a livin' bein', and I want you to see if you think it's a bit nat'ral. Tell me to-night when I come round to supper."

"Yes, I will, 'Nijah," said Kate kindly, as she slipped the roll into her pocket, and Adonijah cleared the door-steps with one leap, and strided off to take his "noonin'" under the apple-trees back of the house, where the oxen were lazily eating their dinner.

"That boy has got considerable ingenuity," said Kate, as she unrolled the paper in the presence of the girls, and proceeded to examine the drawing; "but, really, I don't believe he will ever make an artist."

"However, I wish he could have an opportunity to develop his tastes," said Hannah. "Why couldn't he make a draughtsman? This isn't a very bad-looking picture, Kate. I'm sure I should know he meant it for a meeting-house, though I should have no idea what he meant that for in the background."

"O, what a looking thing!" laughed Mary. "Poor 'Nijah never need attempt to be a Raphael. He would do better holding a plough in the north field. Dear me! Kate, what will you say to him?"

"O, something encouraging," said Kate. "An at-

tempt deserves appreciation at least, if it is ever so rude and untimely. 'Nijah is more original than most people we meet, and he does have now and then a remarkably bright idea. He don't have any opportunity to develop his refined notions, — the family are all so coarse, and think manual labor the only commendable thing."

"Yes, and Sally never will give him an encouraging word; but it's always 'Here, 'Nijah, bring me a pail of water, or an armful of wood, and don't be droning over that old book.' I've heard her many a time. She can't understand him at all," said Mary.

"He must suffer from being so bashful," said Hannah, "and, instead of outgrowing it, I believe he grows into it. I never thought of his being so terribly awkward and bashful when we went to school. He is nearly as old as Kate — but good-day. I can't spend my time moralizing or gossiping this afternoon. I am going to write a startling story, with Adonijah for hero."

Hannah darted away, ran lightly up the old back-stairs, and was soon comfortably seated in a retired corner, where she spent the entire afternoon in solitude, oblivious to all around her, even the continual drill on the piano in the parlor below, while she lived in an ideal world of her own, laughing or crying over her manuscript as the sentiment dictated.

Kate and Mary were also absorbed in their own favorite employment. Kate hid away in a flowery nook, where she could see in the distance the old farm-house, and the tall, red gate leading into the barn-yard; and with her book and pencil sketched away quietly, or sat back in her rough but comfortable seat, and looked dreamily around her, weaving her

thoughts into visions of future opportunity and attainments. Mary, sitting at the piano, with the wind stealing in through the open window, lifting gently the stray curl at her neck, and adding a deeper tint to her cheek, run her fingers in quick succession over the keys, practicing the scales for hours, wholly forgetful of time or surroundings.

Thus passed away the afternoon of this washing day, which was similar to all of the rest, and, as the girls declared, was productive of more good results than almost any other day in the week.

Somehow, working together on the old porch, with the soft breeze fluttering the myriads of leaves on the numerous apple-trees, where the birds sang in a chorus of melody, making grand strains of oratorio music, as Mary said, had a tendency to draw their hearts nearer together, and call out those thoughts which inspired their souls to lofty hopes and desires. Each one was an inspiration for all; the hopes of one increased the hopes of the other; and the expression of these hopes, desires, and ambitions, which was unreserved on washing day, bound the hearts and the souls of the cheerful workers into a firmer and sweeter friendship, which was sure to do much toward developing their individual talents and tastes. Having from their own exertions and commendable perseverance, and the cheerful assistance of their parents, been educated far above the commonality of farmers' daughters, they lived above the manual labor they performed, in a sphere of thought elevated, lofty, and pure.

Owing to their limited resources, to educate themselves respectably had taken more time than is usually given to finishing young ladies' education; but their close application to their studies, their constant em-

ployment, and their limited means, gave them little time or opportunity, even if they had desired it, to attend to the minor points of dress, fashion, looks, or the many frivolities which are attended to by too many young ladies, and therefore they were as fresh and merry and bright as girls of eighteen, while their minds were stored with useful knowledge, and their hopes and desires were far above those of a majority of their sex. Washing day came in with gladsome voices to welcome it, and went out with soft tones half weary, and eyelids drooping, but warm hearts blessing it, and stimulated to greater action and livelier ambition. Huddled together on the old sofa, in the soft country twilight, leaning upon each other, and filled with unutterable emotions, they watched dreamily the moonbeams lying white upon the carpet, and only spoke after long intervals of thought and silence.

The whippoorwill's clear notes floating over the green dewy lawn from the still woods, gave a touch of pathos to their thoughts, and softened their ambitious dreams into gentle hopes of future usefulness and personal elevation.

## CHAPTER II.

### AGAINST THE TIDE.

"GUESS the oddest thing that ever could occur," said Mary, as she rushed into the sitting-room one sultry September afternoon, where her sisters were reading and trying to keep cool — Kate lounging on the sofa, and Hannah sitting in a stiff rocker.

"A little air in motion; I am nearly suffocated with the heat," said Hannah, without lifting her eyes from the book she was reading.

"A glass of iced lemonade brought to me on a silver salver," said Kate lazily.

"O you selfish things! do give a thought to your neighbors. Self-abnegation, somebody says, forms the most heavenly trait of woman's nature."

"You mean human nature," said Hannah.

"Well, woman's nature and human nature are all the same," said Mary, "but why don't you guess?"

"Is there really some news on the wing?" asked Kate, shutting her book with a finger between the leaves, and displaying a small amount of lazy interest.

"Of course there is; else why am I rushing around in this way?" said Mary.

"Good or bad?" asked Hannah.

"Startling because of its rarity," said Mary.

"A cloud in the sky portending a shower of rain," guessed Kate.

"The mouse caught, that gnawed a hole through my scrap-book," guessed Hannah.

"How many times must I refer you to your neighbors?" said Mary. "I don't trouble myself about rats and mice just now, or showers of rain. It's something to do with the human race. Now guess with some sense and reason."

"Perhaps Sally's got a beau, or Deacon Price and old Aunt Patty are married, or Dan Pike's pigs have been destroying somebody's fine garden," said Kate.

"Or Maurice has invited you to a picnic," put in Hannah, now thoroughly awake, and full of interest.

"Pooh! a Yankee ought to guess nearer right. Something odd, I told you."

"Well, haven't we guessed the oddest things in the world, except about the pigs?" asked Kate. "'Tisn't anything about New York, is it?"

"Not exactly. You are too lazy to have a keen thought; so listen."

"We are giving the closest attention," said Hannah, closing her book, and laying it on the table.

"Why, it's just this. Hark! do you hear that pounding?"

"Yes, I do, and I've been wondering what it was for the last hour. Is anybody putting up a new house in the vicinity?" said Kate.

"No, but Sally is going to have a tea-party next Thursday afternoon in the maple grove at the foot of the knoll south of the house, and 'Nijah is making the table and seats."

"I never should have guessed that, if I had tried from now till spring," said Hannah.

"It is the very last thing that would have entered my mind," said Kate. "Are we invited?"

"Of course. I've just seen Sally. She says 'Nijah put it into her head, and promised to do everything but the cooking. She wouldn't hear a word to it at first; but he 'hung on so,' to use Sally's words, and seemed so set on it, and promised to make her a new kneading-board if she would, and churn the butter as early as she wanted him to for two weeks, and seemed so anxious about it, that she finally consented."

"Good for 'Nijah!" laughed Hannah. "A treat for us just before going to New York."

"I half think 'Nijah thought of it too," said Kate. "He wouldn't have told Sally if he had, and I'm conceited enough to believe this party is a farewell honor to us."

"There, isn't that a grand idea!" said Hannah, "too good to prove only a fancy of a surmising brain. Don't let us get disenchanted, but accept the supposition as a fact, and act accordingly."

"And dress in our best, and wear wreaths?" asked Mary.

"Dress in our best by all means," said Kate; "but as for the wreaths, let each one decide for herself. For my part, I think it would look affected."

"Imagine me in a wreath!" laughed Hannah. "How conspicuous it would make my high cheek-bones and freckles! Anything else but ornaments that will make those prominent."

"O fie! don't prate on that," said Mary. "I don't think your cheek-bones are so very high, and I'm sure from where I am now, I don't see over half a dozen freckles; do you, Kate?"

"I can't exert myself sufficiently to count them," said Kate, "but I think Hannah and I can both easily dispense with the wreath. Have you heard anything about wreaths that caused you to mention them?"

"Well, just a hint. I think all the girls will wear them," said Mary.

"Why, what makes you think so?" asked Hannah with a wise look, as if she suspected Mary to be the originator of the plan.

"Because I heard a hint that way. I don't know much about it, but I think it would be fantastic, and rather fairy-like. I think I shall wear one, for I don't like to be odd," said Mary, pulling off her fingerless gloves.

"Confess now, Mary, that you originated the idea, and mentioned it to Sally," said Kate, with a very sly twinkle in her eye, as she changed her position on the old sofa a little.

"Well, what if I did? Haven't I as good a right to propose things as anybody? and isn't it just as good an idea as if somebody else proposed it?" said Mary, a little chagrined that her secret had been divined, especially as she had proposed the wearing of wreaths because she had that afternoon made one, and, standing before the mirror with it poised on her head, had thought it exceedingly becoming, and wanted an excuse to wear one at the tea-party. Like the world at large, she had thought to gratify herself, and not appear strange by causing others to follow her example.

"Why, the idea is all the better because you proposed it," said Hannah, taking up her book again as if to recommence her reading. "I would like to see the girls all have wreaths on their heads, and flowers all about them; for we'll not have much more time to play with and admire the beauties of summer."

"But we shall see the great city, the thousand things we have read about, — street cars, omnibuses, Broadway stores, Fifth Avenue residences, magnifi-

cent churches, crowds of people, ferry-boats, everything grand, exciting, and splendid; and we shall learn so much! For my part, I am tired of being an ignoramus," said Mary, flinging herself by the side of Kate on the sofa, and lying back on its unoccupied arm. "I wish I knew what everybody thinks about it."

"I can guess what everybody thinks of it in this neighborhood who has heard of it. They think it preposterous, rash, and dangerous, I am sure," said Kate.

"It's not a wonder, either, that they do. I suppose," said Hannah, "they don't know our plans and ideas as we do, nor how very anxious we are to learn something; besides, it's a new thing for girls to do anything independent. If we were boys, now, it would be all right enough; but *I* think girls can do something as well as boys."

"At least I have a curiosity to find out whether they can or not," said Kate.

"We'll show them what can be done," said Mary, as she scrutinized the book Kate had been reading. "'Marble Faun!' Dear me! Kate, how many times are you going to read that odd story over?"

"I'm not decided," said Kate, opening her book and looking over the pages. "Don't talk any more now, Mary; it's too warm."

Thursday proved to be a very propitious and charming day, and the girls were delighted with the bright prospect of a gay afternoon. An undercurrent of news had stolen very slyly through the air that there would be a dance after supper, under the large maple, a little in the rear of the grove, after which the company was to be refreshed with sweetmeats and lemonade.

A little later than most of the party had started (owing more to Mary's bad luck with her hair, and Kate's inability to find one of her slippers, than a desire to be like fine and showy ladies), the three girls at last ran down the front steps, and walked on toward the maple grove.

"Do keep on this side of me, Kate, toward the sun," said Mary, "or my face will be blistered; besides, it looks awful green in me not to have a parasol. If Sally hadn't bounced on mine so last Sunday, it would be in good working order now; but I do wish I had a better fan. I think it looks so elegant to see a lady with a handsome fan. I know I look like a dowdy. I feel so. My dress was starched too stiff, and these frills on my sleeves are too limp to compare."

"She looks very nice, don't she, Kate?" said Hannah, looking with a half squint in her eyes at Mary's airy little figure *cap-a-pie*.

"Why, I never saw you look better, Mary," said Kate, holding her parasol so as to shade both of their faces as well as possible from the sun. "I don't think your dress is too stiff. I like to see dresses stand out considerably. I think they make persons look more elegant and graceful."

"Well, don't Kate look just artistic in that new collar and scarlet bow, and the scarlet ribbon on her hair?" asked Mary, well pleased with her compliments, and ready to please others in turn.

Hannah was the one addressed, and replied, as usual on such matters, with little interest.

As they drew nearer the grove, they heard merry voices, and saw now and then a glimpse of an airy figure, the flutter of a white dress or crimson scarf, and their own faces began to shine with anima-

tion. They were walking in a little narrow path through a clover field, and the "second crop" looked green and cool and delightful. At the end of the field was a pair of bars, half hidden by an old wild cherry-tree, and shrubbery forming a thicket drooped its dense foliage over the rude bar-posts, making it a charming place to linger and lean on the rustic rails. The girls were so busy with an animated conversation, that almost before they had thought of such a thing, the bars were dropped in a heap at one end, and there stood Adonjiah blushing and laughing before them.

"Why, how you did startle us, 'Nijah! Where did you whisk from so quick?" said Mary.

"Right there in the alders. I've been a-waitin' for you here for full half an hour," said 'Nijah.

"I'm sure it's very kind of you to wait for us, 'Nijah; but hasn't the company missed you, think, and wondered where you were?" said Kate.

"No, I guess not. Nobody seldom misses me. I'm allers an odd one at picnics and such things. Good many folks says you girls is 'stuck up,' but I don't think so. I know I'm jest the awkwardest feller that ever was, and I'm sure I never see you turn up your nose at me, though I can't help expectin' it every time I see ye, 'cause you understand the ways of the world so well," said Adonijah, as the girls stood on the opposite side of the bars, and stopped while he put them up.

"O fie! 'Nijah," said Hannah; "who cares for awkwardness? We would be a silly mess of girls to turn up our noses at anybody as kind as you are. How many are there in the grove?"

"I guess everybody that was invited, 'cept Martha an' Jane Wood. They've got the measles," said

Adonijah. "I begun to be 'fraid you wouldn't come 'tall, and that would a been a bad hit, fur" — here Adonijah stopped, and blushed redder than ever.

"For what, 'Nijah?" asked Mary, in a voice that betrayed great curiosity.

"Why, because the 'time' was got up on your accounts," blurted out 'Nijah, as he took long strides which threatened near separation, if the girls didn't either walk faster, or he slacken his pace.

"Was it really all for us?" asked Kate; "and we must thank you for it too, because I know it was your invention. Besides, I don't believe there is another young man in the neighborhood who has got enough enterprise to start such a thing."

This one speech of Kate fully repaid Adonijah for all his trouble, and if the whole thing had been broken up then, he would have been perfectly satisfied. Even his labor with the rough table and seats, the blood-blister on the end of his thumb, the working for his Uncle Jim, after the chores were done at home, to procure money for the sweetmeats and lemonade, sank into insipid insignificance by the side of Kate's compliment. But he only walked faster than ever, with his long arms swinging by his side, and his new stiff boots squeaking tremendously at every step.

"Don't go so fast, 'Nijah," called Hannah, in as low a tone as possible, that the picnickers might not hear.

Adonijah halted with a sudden jerk, and in his embarrassment and confusion stooped awkwardly, and picked up a stone, which he aimed at a red squirrel running along the fence, without the least intention of hitting it.

"There's Emma and Dill," said Mary, as they neared the grove, and saw a merry group of young

people walking, sitting, and enjoying themselves generally. "Don't they make a beautiful picture?" said Kate.

In a few moments they were in the midst of the company themselves, laughing, asking questions, and making merry with the rest. Several of the company stood a little aloof, and looked on grimly.

"I hope they're late enough," Mary heard somebody say. "How they do try to put on style! Pa says their father and mother must be perfectly crazy to think of letting them go to New York; and pa knows just what New York is, for he stayed there nearly six weeks, once, when he was at work a-carpentering, and he says it's no place for lone young girls; and he wonders their father will be so rash."

Mary gave Kate's sleeve a slight jerk, but Kate had not heard the gossip. She was too busily engaged; so, as soon as opportunity offered, Mary whispered the news to Hannah, who said she wasn't at all surprised, and she thought they were treated rather coolly, but it wasn't the least consequence. Not long after this, as the three sisters and several others sat in a group together, Maurice Pike approached them.

"Heard you was goin' to New York," he said, looking at Hannah, who, as the oldest, generally had all the questions to answer.

"We talk of it," answered Hannah, who was with the other girls making a wreath of maple leaves for the table.

"You won't stay there long, I'm thinkin'," said Maurice. "It's a bad enough place for men; most on 'em gets their pockets picked, and some on 'em gits murdered; but for girls to think of goin' there, it's like running into confusion and distress."

"O dear! how can you think of such a thing as going there?" said little pale-faced Dill, who sat at Hannah's knee, and furnished her with bits of straw to pin the leaves together.

"We don't intend to get robbed, or anything of the kind," spoke up Kate, as if she intended to convince them all at once. "Daniel Stearns didn't get injured by going there, and we — Hannah and I — are older than he was."

"But you are girls," said Maurice, as if that settled the whole matter on his side.

"But that don't keep us from having common sense," said Kate.

"Well, I wouldn't resk a sister of mine there," said Maurice.

Kate wanted to tell him that he would risk her to nearly work herself to death, and run and wait upon him when she was too tired to stand, while he sat and did nothing; but she wisely refrained from making any personal remarks.

"It's a crazy thing to do, and no mistake," said a tall, sharp-eyed girl, standing a little outside of the circle. "I wouldn't make such a boy of myself, such a daring, bold girl, as one *must* be to go unprotected, without a single friend or relation, in the worst place in the world."

The sisters' faces grew red with indignation, and Hannah, who was sometimes a little hasty, was about to make a sharp reply, but she caught a glimpse of slender little Dill's face, white and anxious, and she said in as calm a voice as possible, "We have friends everywhere, among the good, and I am sure there are good people in New York. We shall attend to our own affairs, and I don't think any one will harm us. Anyhow, I am not afraid."

"Nor I either," said Mary; "we are going to New York for the good we can get out of it. We shall have no time to give any attention to the bad, even if we wished to."

"I'll tell you what I've heard lately, that happened right in the midst of the city," said the black-eyed girl. "A young lady who was visiting there went out alone one day, only just a little ways, to match some ribbon, and never came back again in the world; and her poor mother went crazy, and is now in the insane asylum; and that is what New York is."

To the three young girls who were anxious to seek their fortunes in the great city, this was an unpleasant story; and they made no reply, which seemed to give the speaker courage to continue.

"I heard of a man besides," she said, "who was killed in broad daylight, and robbed of all his money. Why, it would really take, I think, a week to tell all I have heard about the city, especially what a dreadful place it is for unprotected females."

"Didn't you never hear none of these stories?" asked Maurice, dropping an apple at the toe of his heavy boots, and then kicking it off in the distance. "They actually hain't got no end. I've heard Uncle Blade tell one after another, hours at a time."

"I don't care about hearing so many frightful things," said Kate, a little uneasy, and anxious to change the subject of the conversation. "Of course, cities are worse than the country, and no doubt there is danger; but we shall try to keep out of it, and accomplish our purpose."

"Strange purpose!" muttered the black-eyed girl. "It would do better for a harum-scarum boy."

"I suppose every one has a right to her own opin-

ion," said Hannah, sorry the next instant she had said it.

"Don't talk this way any longer," said Dill. "Look! Adonijah and Sally are coming to set the table, and the wreath isn't finished."

"Yes it is, just finished," said Hannah, holding it up to be admired; "it shall be placed in the middle of the table. Come, let us help Sally."

Sally, with a covered dish, and Adonijah, with a large basket, drew near them, and then preparations went on for supper. The snowy cloth was thrown over the rough boards which formed a temporary table, and busy hands made the earthenware fly, while their tongues followed the example.

"O Sally, you are just the best cook in the world," said Mary, as she cut a light cake, with sharpened appetite.

"Wait'll you've tasted of it," said Sally, who was a stout buxom girl, with a very full red face, and hands which much resembled Adonijah's in color and hardiness. "It's all nonsense to set the table out here," she continued. "Goodness! there's a spider now, and the leaves keep a-dropping from the trees, and make the table look like confusion! It'll keep somebody busy to keep them off."

"O don't mind if they come on; let us leave them," said Kate; "they have begun to turn; here is one of a beautiful crimson dropped pat into this plate. How pure and sweet it looks, lying on the white china!"

While Kate was so busy admiring the stray leaf, Sally was brushing them off from the table with a napkin.

"Sally's too neat," said Mary. "Don't, Sally, brush the wreath off. Don't you think it is pretty?"

"O, it's good enough for them who don't have nothing else to do but make such things," said Sally, busily engaged over a loaf of cake which she didn't feel quite satisfied with, because it didn't have the right "bake" on it.

"Say, Sally, are we going to dance after supper?" whispered Mary in the busy hostess' ear, as they stood a little apart from the rest.

"So Adonijah says," answered Sally; "why, do you want to? I thought you folks didn't believe in it."

"Well, they don't believe in balls, or anything like that; but they think a little dance under the trees, when we are all acquainted, is well enough," said Mary.

"Maurice has got his fiddle up to the house, I believe; so I guess there'll be something after supper."

And there was a merry good time, a genuine dance, not a dawdling, dreamy walk through the figures, but animated, though not altogether graceful movements. Maurice, sitting on a rough bench, played over and over the same old tunes on a violin of very inferior quality and harsh tone; but the hearts of the merry dancers were all in tune, and they balanced and turned, chasséed and promenaded, their faces all aglow with the exercise and enjoyment. The leaves on the maples continued to drop in gentle silence, the air grew cooler and sweeter as the twilight approached, and at last, in the glow of the brilliant tints of the west, they rested, and ate the sweetmeats Adonijah had prepared. It was altogether a pleasant party to the three girls; yet the talk about New York, the stories concerning the great city, though not unheard before, threw a little shadow across their hopes and their enjoyment.

As they were about to depart, Sally called Hannah one side, and said in a low tone, "You don't really intend to go to New York, do you, Hannah, without nobody in the world to protect you girls? I heard so, but I told the folks I couldn't believe it."

"We can't tell about the future much," said Hannah, "but we expect to go."

"Adonijah was sure you was going, but I couldn't be. I wish you could talk with pa 'bout it. I shouldn't really think you'd go for the world. I should think you'd rather stay at home this winter; there ain't near so much to do in the winter, you know, as there is in the sumner; and I should think you might enjoy yourselves here."

"Why, Sally," said Hannah, "we are not going to enjoy ourselves at all. We are going to learn something, or try to. There are no opportunities here, and we want to go where there are some."

"What makes you be so different from all the other girls? There isn't one but you that could be hired to go, and I do think it's foolish; and I think it has a bad influence. Everybody kind of talks about it."

"Well, Sally, we can't help it if they do; and I can't believe it will be in the end a bad influence. You have given us a great treat, you and 'Nijah, and I think all have enjoyed it immensely. You had such a nice supper, and everything went off so well."

"I think I had pretty good luck with everything but that one loaf of cake that had the kiss-candy in the middle. That didn't bake just right, but it went off pretty well, after all. I hope you've all had a good time."

Slowly the girls wended their way homeward, somewhat weary, but a little disturbed and unsatisfied on

the New York question. Each one, as she gathered her skirts away from the cool moist clover, walked on silently, and thought of the dangers to be met in the city. Few words were spoken; and when they got home, they put away their "fixings," unbound their hair, and took their accustomed place on the old sofa. The house was still, the twilight grew deeper, and the wind arose and sighed and moaned in the branches of the old cherry-trees. New York had never seemed to them before as it did that night; never so gloomy and dark and unfriendly. Whether it was the opposition they had met with at the party, or some unseen influence, they could not tell. Neither dared or wished to speak her thoughts to the others, and each hoped the others felt less discouragement. The shadows grew thicker, but they did not wish for a light; and when they were entirely hidden in the darkness, the door opened, and their father stood on the threshold and said, "Children, are you all here?"

"Yes," answered Hannah, wondering what was coming, and taking a position a little more erect.

Steps and a deeper shadow told them that father had advanced into the room, and taken a seat in the stiff rocker.

"I have been thinking," he said, as he settled himself in the chair, "that it's a great undertaking for you to go to New York. It don't seem quite the thing for three girls to go into a great city, and find their way around unprotected. If there was some one there who would take a little care of you; but there isn't one in the whole city to depend on, and I am afraid it is rash. I didn't think so much about it when it was first proposed, because the time to go was in the dis-

tance, and I hardly realized that it would ever come around; but now the first of October is drawing near, and there isn't much more time to consider. I suppose you have set your hearts on it, and I don't wonder at all that you want to go somewhere to learn something; but if anything dreadful should happen to one or all of you, all the learning you would get wouldn't be of much consequence. Why don't you conclude to stay at home, after all? I hear that a portrait-painter is coming to town this winter; and Kate can go once a week, and take lessons of him. Mary can go at the same time, and take her lessons as she did last winter; and Hannah can stay at home and write. Wouldn't this be a better way than to go away off to New York when you are unused to cities, and are unsuspecting, and therefore liable to be imposed upon?"

He ceased to speak, but for a moment there was no answer from the old sofa, where three hearts were throbbing with disappointment, feeling that their hopes were about to be crushed. Then Kate said, in a voice which, in spite of her efforts to the contrary, betrayed somewhat her feelings, —

"We can depend on each other, father. We will take care of each other; three girls together are so different from one, you know."

"Yes, of course, that is true. I wouldn't have consented for a moment for one to go alone; but the question is whether you will really gain anything by going? Wouldn't you do better to stay at home, and do as I said?"

"For my part," said Mary, "I don't feel as if I could take lessons any longer from Miss Branch. Besides, everything is so stale and 'humdrummy' here."

"I want to go where I can see some pictures," said Kate, her ambition increasing as it came in contact with opposition.

Hannah said nothing, for she well knew that Kate and Mary were the ones to decide, because they had a very conspicuous object, — to take lessons, and prepare themselves for lives of usefulness and activity, while her object was not so plainly to be seen, for she was to take no lessons in authorship, except those lessons which could be understood wholly only by her own heart.

They heard the gentle, undecided tap of father's fingers against the arm of the rocker, and the crickets sung their solemn songs in their hidden nooks, and the wind continued to moan strangely in the boughs of the cherry-trees.

"I'm afraid it isn't wise," said father, at last, as he tapped louder against the chair arm. "If I had plenty of money, so that I could get you a good boarding-place, and leave you in the care of some responsible person — but there is no use to think of that, and you will have a hard time, and I'm afraid will regret you ever undertook such a thing. I'm afraid your ambition is too great. You can be comfortable at home, free from danger; and when you are older, you may have a better opportunity."

"I am already twenty-two," said Hannah, "and there are a plenty of girls older than I who stay in one place year after year, and have no better opportunities. I begin to think opportunities come to those who seek them — and make them."

"It does seem so in your case," said father, "but there is such a thing as being rash and imprudent; and somehow this New York project has a very doubt-

ful look. However, think it over carefully, and perhaps you'll decide, after all, that staying at home is the wisest and best thing you can do."

A few moments more, and father was gone; and the girls, after a moment of silence, arose, and, groping their way to their chamber, lighted a lamp, and without their usual merry laughs or little plans for the morrow, lay down upon their beds to think anxiously, and then fall asleep. They had settled themselves thoroughly for this, when they heard a slight squeak from the old back-stairs, a light step in the outer room, and the door soon opened, and there stood mother with a little lamp in her hand, and her face shining all over with that rare mother-look, as she advanced lightly into the room, and placed the lamp upon the stand.

"What is the matter?" asked all three together, bobbing their heads up from their pillows, and looking curiously into their mother's face.

"O, nothing is the matter," said mother; "only I thought I would come up a moment before you went to sleep. Your father has been talking rather discouraging about New York, hasn't he?" She sat down on the side of one of the beds, where she could look into all their faces.

"Yes," answered Kate, her black eyes searching her mother's face to find some ray of hope; "he thinks we had better not go. Do you think so, mother?"

There was a world of anxiety and interest in her voice as she said this; for Kate had been thinking of New York for a long, long time, and it was crushing her brightest hopes to give up a winter there. Hannah and Mary waited anxiously for their mother's answer, which, after all, would decide their fate.

"I came up," said mother, "to tell you not to worry about it, but to go to sleep; and in the morning we'll talk about it. I don't think it a very frightful thing to go to New York, three of you together; and if you don't like it after you get there, you can come home again easy enough. You don't know what you *can* do without trying. But whatever the future brings about, don't let us borrow trouble; for if we do the best we know, our mistakes won't really amount to much, and we shall come out well in the end. Morning is the time for thought and consideration; the night is the time to sleep."

The three heads, wreathed around with unbound hair, began already to settle easily on their pillows, for the soothing, cheerful voice swept away all their burdens and fears, and the lips relaxed into half smiles; for they felt that the tide was turning in their favor, and the way no longer looked dark or frightful, but pleasant and quiet; for mother had a sweet and wonderful power of lifting burdens from her children's hearts.

## CHAPTER III.

### IN THE ORCHARD.

It was all settled. The obstacles were overcome at last, and New York was destined to receive three unsophisticated and trusting young girls into its wicked heart.

Three little trunks were all packed even a day before their departure, and stood in a row in the great airy chamber which was soon to be vacated and lonely, — three old-fashioned little trunks, containing nearly all the personal effects of their owners; a small collection, but neat, clean, and in good order.

It was the last day of September, — a still, happy day, full of far-off sunshine, and deep, cool shadows. Until noon, there had been an unusual bustle and stir in the old farm-house, running up and down stairs, and to and fro from one room to another; numberless unnecessary steps taken, much forgotten and then remembered, things misplaced and searched for, and a general time of confusion. But afternoon found everything quiet, all things in order, and the girls ready for a pleasant time all to themselves. They left the farm-house, and wandered to the old orchard, a favorite and delightful resort. The orchard! what a host of memories this one word calls up in the minds of men and women whose childhood was passed on a great rambling farm, free from the village smoke, and

the city's bustle, — memories of cool shadows, gay breezes, broken and twisted by the dense branches and foliage, and perfumed with the honey drops in the crimson clover, and the sweets from a world of blossoms; of tumbles in heaps of new-mown hay, of scrambles after golden fruit that an unexpected flurry in the air whisked from the branches down upon the cool grass; of innocence, freedom from care and sin, and of every sweet and pleasant thing that clusters round the childhood of a country lad or lass!

The orchard is not the least among the many things which guard the lives of those who wander from the warm home-nest out into a world of temptations; not the least to keep fragrant and green the beautiful fields of the heart, and preserve the seeds of the innocence and simplicity of childhood, to blossom in after years into delightful harvests of sincerity and good works. O that grand old orchard of the Windsor farm! long, and rolling, and wide, surrounded by a mossy stone wall, and shadowed by numerous apple-trees, — not the trim, stately apple-trees of modern times, but leaning, and crooked, and bent, with now and then a straggling limb brushing against the dark grass, and forming a mysterious nook, where long-stemmed dandelions sprang up, and opened their charming crowns of gold in all modesty and simplicity. Such a long, shady orchard, with a clinging grape-vine at one end, coiled and twisted in and out of the branches of a tree distinguished for its longevity; a mossy ledge at the other end, where a bed of ferns fluttered their soft fronds, and sang unceasingly of the deep pleasant woods, — a ledge with inviting little seats, soft with moss, where oft and oft the Windsor girls had sat, and dreamed, and hoped, and planned.

What more fitting place for them to wander on the memorable day before their journey away from all the sweet influences of a pure and quiet home, into a place darkened by ambition, love of gain, want, misery, and crime ?

Here they came, walking one after the other in the autumn grass, that was decked no longer with the dandelion's yellow disk, but with light still leaves from the apple-boughs, which were strewn about like glowing emeralds on a bright green vest.

With slow steps and pensive looks they filed through the long orchard, taking note of the dropping leaves, but saying nothing concerning them, and, clambering up the old ledge, sat down side by side on the mossy seats, and looked off over the still pastures and deep woods which were already testimonies of summer's departure. Intuitively hand sought hand, while each heart was filled with unspoken thoughts and feelings. Each had her own little musings of self, which would never be spoken.

Hannah had her romance of love, which in the years gone had been all her life, and joy, and hope : but it had faded ; yet in her heart only as the planets fade ; for as often as the fit of meditation was upon her, the dream came back fresh and strong to taunt her with its vanished joys and bright anticipations. She sat and looked over the landscape as she had done many times before. The scenery she had beheld in its every phase and variety ; yet never had it seemed quite so dear to her as on this day ; never so beautiful and sweet.

"The old dream must be laid away now," she thought ; it was only selfishness to nourish and cherish it in her heart. There was no reality for the future in it, nothing to help her in her struggles upward through

the thorny path to success, nothing in it to cheer and encourage her; but it only cloyed, and so she must lay it away, and, if possible, forget that she ever had hoped or dreamed of what she was now sure would never be realized.

Ah! the countless disappointments and crushed hopes that young hearts have been doomed to experience! where are they? Through all the ages of time, they have filled the air with their sighs so soft and subtle, that the inexperienced hear them not, and only the aching hearts suffer, and are silent.

The tones of funereal bells proclaim to the world that a new-made grave must receive some earthly idol, and we listen solemnly, and are sad and sympathetic; the black dress and sweeping veil may tell us that we look upon a mourner; but only the keenest and most sensitive will guess what a fond young heart may suffer, that has dreamed a dream of happy love, and seen it fade away. The death of loved ones has a promise in it, — a promise of restoration, of future meetings more beautiful and sweet than those of the past, of freedom from all pain to the lost one, of a great gain in the unseen City; and hearts may look up smiling through their tears, and feel the sweet presence of the departed around them. But there is no hope like this to the trusting young heart, that in its freshness and simplicity has laid its tenderest first love on the altar of hope and perfect trustfulness, and seen it crumble away into ashes that can have no resurrection. Alone in its grief, there is no comfort but forgetfulness, from which it shrinks, as we all shrink from forgetting that which has been dearest to us, and has given us the liveliest joy. Are all these experiences nothing but a vanishing dream, a mere vision of beauty

which we see for a moment as we pass along, and then lose forever? May we not hope that they are all remembered and treasured up in the great heart of God, to be returned, only far more beautiful than before, to our longing, unsatisfied hearts? Can we not cherish the dream, and forget the idol?

Hannah thought something of this, though vaguely, as she looked steadily, beyond wood and pasture, to the far-off silver rim of the ocean. Her sisters spoke to each other, but their voices seemed like distant sounds in her ears, uncertain and unreal. She was not unhappy. Her life had been too active and useful to give room for morbid sentimentality; there had been too much freshness, beauty, and blessed reality in her life, to make her desponding; it was only the sweet dream of love which she looked back upon in regretful silence, wondering if ever in the future it would be renewed.

"Hannah! Hannah! are you asleep? you haven't spoken for a long time, and Kate and I have been jabbering close to you."

At these words she started, and the present all came back to her.

"I believe I was looking at the ocean," she said. "It is such a fathomless, endless thing to look at."

"No more so than your thoughts have been, from the way you appeared," said Kate. "I thought we were going to put by sentimentality for a time."

"Did you?" answered Hannah. "I haven't heard any such decision, but I suppose that was what I was thinking about so busily; or at least, summed up together, it would amount to that."

"I imagine this is our last opportunity for sentimentality for some time to come, whether we decide to

put it by or not," said Mary. "Just to-morrow, only to-morrow, and we shall be gone."

"And mother will miss us so much! that worries me some," said Hannah. "However, we may be obliged to come back in a few weeks, you know. We may find that we have made a great mistake in going so helpless into the city."

"As long as we have our health and minds unimpaired, the word helpless does not apply to us," said Kate.

"Perhaps not," answered Hannah, "in the sense you interpret it. I meant with little money and no friends, which is our case exactly."

"Yes, I know it is; but we can try it, as mother says; there is no harm in that," said Kate, expressing this sentiment for the twentieth time, to settle doubts, and restore ambition.

"We can be as seclusive as we like in New York," said Mary, "and one won't feel so embarrassed to wear one dress all the season, because we shall hardly see the same person twice."

"Girls, do you think we shall be missed much in the neighborhood?" asked Hannah earnestly.

"There is one who will miss us," said Mary, "or, at least, he will miss Kate; and that is Adonijah."

"Yes, he will miss us, I am sure," said Hannah, "not only for an hour, but for all the time we are gone. 'Nijah is a good friend, but I hardly see why he takes to us so, and understands us so well. I have half a mind to believe he will make his mark in the world."

"O how can he? there is no possible chance," said Mary. "He has only a very tolerable education, speaks roughly and ungrammatically, and hasn't the least encouragement at home."

"I know that," said Kate, "but he is original and appreciative of fine things, and we cannot judge a person's future by outward appearance. But there is another who will miss us; or rather, she will miss Hannah, — little Dill."

"Dear little thing! so she will," said Hannah, "and I shall miss her too. Her face is so pale, it makes me think that she will be missed from earth soon."

"O no; she is stronger this fall, her father said, than she has been before for years. Did you see her crying last Sunday in church?" said Mary.

"*I* did," said Hannah, "and she told me after meeting that the sermon frightened her, causing her to fear that she could never be gathered with the redeemed in heaven, because of her sin. How wicked the world must be, if little Dill is wicked!"

"What did you tell her?" asked Kate.

"I can hardly tell you. I tried to comfort her, but I am so weak myself."

"You are not so weak but that you know little Dill needn't be afraid of future punishment, I hope," said Kate.

"Well, but how could I make her believe it? I said all the encouraging and kind things I could to her, and promised to write long letters when in New York, and she seemed to feel better, but not convinced."

"I generally feel oppressed whenever I listen to a sermon of Mr. Hayes's," said Mary, "and no wonder slender little Dill is so much influenced. I do wonder if such sermons are a benefit or not."

"*Not*," said Kate emphatically, — "at least not for me. They always make me feel rebellious, they are so conservative. As if a particular creed would take a person to heaven, and as if God desired us all to be gloomy and afraid!"

"As for me," said Hannah, "I require and desire more light on the subject of religion, and I mean to think about it, and make investigations concerning it when I go to New York, and learn at least something more than I know, that I may talk with Dill with more confidence. I am now so ignorant that I can only say that I believe God will deal with us with tenderness and mercy, and such things as my faith causes me to believe; but as for any real knowledge which I can explain satisfactorily even to myself, I believe I do not possess it."

"How can you find it in New York?" asked Mary in all earnestness.

"No better than I could anywhere, perhaps; but as I am to be there this winter, it must be there where I shall think of it. Were I to remain at home, I would do the same, perhaps."

"*I* shall go to hear Beecher. I do not think he will frighten any one," said Kate.

"There is where we will all go," said Hannah, "and see if we can learn at least what has made the man so popular."

"And hear that great organ," said Mary. "I find religion in music; but they drawl so in the church here, it makes me feel as if I were on nettles to listen to them, instead of being transported beyond the earth into visions of bliss, as I am sure I should be by the music in Beecher's."

"Let us not be too expectant. True religion is, after all, in our own hearts; and perhaps if we were just right, the hymns sung in the church here would inspire us."

"They might inspire some, but not me," said Mary. "I feel, every time I hear them sing, as though I

wanted to spring into the midst of them, and with a baton in my hand rouse some life into them, and keep them from murdering such words as, —

'Joy to the world! the Lord has come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing.'

Last Sunday they drawled through it so lazily, an intelligent person could not have believed them very joyful or glad, but thought they were lamenting over some misfortune. I do like to see anybody stand erect, and look, if they can't sing, as though they meant and felt it."

"However, I expect they are more sincere than most New York choirs," said Hannah; "but I agree with you, Mary. I actually smiled last Sunday to see how entirely the singing disagreed with the hymn, and everybody looked so very solemn, as if a dirge was being chanted instead of a hymn of rejoicing sung. We haven't seen much of the world yet, and probably are not good judges."

"Undoubtedly we are not," said Kate. "Wait till we try New York a while, then we shall be more competent to express our opinions. There comes 'Nijah through the orchard with a couple of gray squirrels. Has he seen us, think?"

"I think not; but call him up here, Kate. I want to see those squirrels, they have such beautiful bushy tails," said Mary, half rising in her seat, and gazing at the young rustic, who, with rapid strides was passing them by, without discovering their retreat.

"'Nijah, don't you see us?" called Kate. "Come up to the ledge, do, if you are not in a hurry, and let us see those squirrels."

'Nijah heard the voice, stopped suddenly, looked down at his boots, then up at the sky, then at the game in his hand, and finally ascended the knoll, and threw the soft grays at the girls' feet.

"O how cruel you were to kill them!" said Mary.

"O, they didn't know what hurt 'em," said 'Nijah; "caught 'em under traps, and brought 'em round — you see I thought you mightn't get a chance to have a dinner of squirrels in New York; and they're good fat ones, and will make a good meal well dressed, and so I brought 'em round to give to you. Doubtful if you'll get any in New York."

"Yes, so it is, very doubtful," said Kate, "and we will have a feast to-morrow. Won't you come over and dine with us, 'Nijah?"

"I'm 'bliged," said 'Nijah, whipping at the ferns with a stick he carried in his hands, "but I can't. I'm engaged to work fur Uncle Jim to chop down some trees, and put up some fence; and you see I have plenty of squirrel dinners. Sally knows exactly how to cook 'em."

"I've no doubt of that," said Mary; "Sally can cook anything well. I haven't forgotten the tea-party yet, have you?"

"Me? Catch a weasel 'sleep fust. I thought it was just the thing to take comfort at, but some didn't. Ye see it leaked out that 'twas on your accounts."

"Well, we shall soon be gone," said Hannah; "to-morrow night we shall sleep on the water, and find ourselves in New York the next morning."

"Blazes! wouldn't I like that?" and 'Nijah whipped more severely at the ferns; threatening to demolish them entirely, to the great dissatisfaction of the girls. "Stay all winter, I s'pose?"

"If we don't get sick of it, and come back," said Kate, smiling.

"No danger of *your* backing down; tell a feller, won't you, what New York is made of, when you get back?"

"Yes, you come over, and we'll have enough stories to last all summer," said Mary.

"Be sure and notice how all the meetin'-houses is built, in what kind of shape I mean, and how Cendril Park is laid out."

"You mean Central Park," said Kate; "and we'll be sure to tell you the whole story."

"Wal, I must be a-goin', if these gray things gets their hides took off to-night, fur it's very near sundown. I shan't be likely to see ye agin; so take good care of yourselves, an' don't get too proud to speak to a feller when you get back."

"Not a bit," said Kate. "We'll see who will improve most in drawing this winter, 'Nijah."

'Nijah could laugh with the best, and at this speech of Kate's, he laughed so uproariously, the girls were afraid, so they said, that there wouldn't be a button left on his vest; and then what would Sally say?

"Well, agreed," said he at last, after which he burst out again into laughter. "Blamed if I won't try with ye," he said.

"Of course you will," said Kate; "I mean it, and we'll compare notes when I get home."

"All right," said 'Nijah, still laughing, as he took up his game. "Good-by, all of ye; take good care of yerselves, and come home in the spring."

"We'll try to," said they all; "good-by, good-by, good-by."

The sun had gone down when the girls left their

seats in the orchard, and wended their way home. Dark shadows were creeping under the walls, and the wind had begun to moan in the apple-trees. The farm-house windows were aglow with the blazing reflection from the west, and the unseen autumn insects sung in a kind of cheerful sadness. Up through the front lawn the girls walked, where the fall blossoms were in their glory, but were tossed about by the fresh breeze blowing briskly from the west. They stopped on the rough old door-steps and looked back.

"Everything is beautiful," said Kate. "Girls, how we shall long for home!"

"Don't, Kate," said Mary, turning away and brushing a tear from her eye.

"Well, suppose we do," said Kate, sorry she had said anything to cause sadness. "Suppose we do; we are to come home any time we please, you know, and it would be strange if we forgot it entirely."

"All of this beauty will soon be gone," said Hannah, "and there will be nothing here to greet our eyes but bare trees and frozen ground; and when everything begins to grow lovely again, we are coming home; so don't let us get homesick to-night."

"We have been so determined to go," said Kate, "that we mustn't get sad and discouraged now, or father will begin to think surely that we are too much children or helpless girls to go into the city."

"Well, I wouldn't give up going," said Mary, in a brave tone, "but it does seem rather dubious to-night; but I shall feel better in the morning. Of course, I'd not act so silly before any one but you."

"Let us have a song," said Kate.

"Yes, a song always does us good; what shall it be?" said Hannah.

"'Falling leaves,' of course: what is there more appropriate?" said Kate, untying her hat-strings and entering the parlor. Mary at the piano, and Hannah and Kate on either side, they sang in sweet and subdued voices a song, the words to which Hannah had composed, and Mary the music.

FALLING LEAVES.

Dropping, dropping,
Crimson and yellow and red,
Sighing so softly and sadly
In the boughs over my head.
One by one they come fluttering,
Or fall in a tremulous shower,
Scarlet and amber and purple,
Dyed by an unseen Power.

Falling, falling,
Down, down in the purling stream;
The lovely summer is passing
Away like a happy dream;
And the water is gayly dancing
With the dying leaves on its breast,
Bearing them onward, onward,
Away to eternal rest.

Whispering, whispering
Words of a long farewell;
Nestling in heaps together,
To sleep in the woody dell.
Dying in wondrous beauty,
Whispering sad as they go,
O beautiful, beautiful leaflets,
We have loved and admired you so.

Dying, dying,
And leaving the forest trees bare,
The voices of unseen spirits
We seem to hear in the air.
Farewell, beautiful leaflets!
The wind is a merciless foe,
And every heart that knows gladness,
Also deep sorrow must know.

The music ceased, and the girls turned about to find their father and mother sitting in the shadow, where they had listened silently to the last strain of their three daughters, before they went out from their care into the world of intrigue and false allurements; and the wind moaned, the crickets sang, and the world moved on the same.

## CHAPTER IV.

### "GOOD–BY."

"WHY, Dill!"

Hannah stood on the old shadowy porch to rest a moment, and take a breath of fresh air. She had been busily at work since early morning; for when three young ladies are going on a journey, there is no end to the preparations until they are well started toward their destination. Unexpectedly, as she stood there, a delicate, slender young girl appeared before her. It was Dill — her face paler than usual, and her eyes brighter and darker.

"Did I startle you?" she asked. "I came to say good-by, and tell you this is my sixteenth birthday. What an easy way I shall have to remember your farewell! I haven't had one present."

"Here is one," said Hannah, kissing the white cheek, "and with it my love, which is the most I can give."

"And the best," answered Dill, returning the caress. "It is the first kiss I have received to-day, and I shall remember it. Are you almost ready to start?"

"Yes, I suppose we are. Kate and Mary are in the garret, stowing away some things; and we have only to change our dresses, and then we are ready."

"And, O dear, how lonesome it will be! 'Nijah

was over to our house last night, and seemed rather gloomy, and it was all because you were going. I told him he was cross, but I don't suppose he meant to be. When will you write me the first letter?"

"When I am well settled, which will be in a week perhaps. What shall I write about first?"

"O, about the city, what you see that is beautiful, and — I suppose there are a great many ministers in New York. Suppose you tell me what some of them say. I have heard few sermons except Mr. Hayes's, and I have thought perhaps all — I mean those who belong to the same denomination — may not believe just like him; and if there is anything true that is a little pleasanter, I would like it. Father says I am only rebellious against the will of God, and I suppose it is true; but I don't see a bit of chance to feel otherwise, so long as I see so much to dread and fear. I wonder that father, or even Mr. Hayes himself, can be happy."

"I shall try to learn much more on this subject than I know now," said Hannah, "and I will tell you all I learn. Sometimes I feel a bit unhappy, because you know I do not belong to the church; yet when I think it all over reasonably, I see nothing to fear. The sermon delivered at poor old Thomas Flat's funeral affected me more than any I ever heard. Thomas didn't belong to the church, you know, and Mr. Hayes made it such a terrible warning. I am trying to find if it would really help me to join any church, especially when I see so much which is to me censurable in all I know; but perhaps I ought not to talk thus to you, Dill."

"Yes, I think it does me good, for I actually get confused at home. Father talks so much about eternal

punishment, and sin, and how easily we may be lost to heaven; and my head swims so sometimes that I catch hold of it with my hands to steady it. I talk about it only to you, and I hope to feel peaceful soon; if I don't, I shall be crazy. I actually told father so once when he had talked to me a long time; and he said the devil was tempting me, and if I didn't fight against him, he would gain the whole power over me. That terrified me worse than ever, and I could hardly sleep that night for seeing strange, terrible images crawling around and glaring at me."

"Why, Dill, I am sure that does not please Jesus Christ, who said, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' Those words always comfort me, and make me feel peaceful; and what has an innocent little thing like you to fear? Do you suppose a kind, pitying Father would make you suffer eternally for sins you never dreamed of? Why, Dill, I believe this is a very absurd idea. Don't grieve yourself any more about it; and so long as you are innocent of sin as now, I am sure you will be safe, and time will make things clear to you."

Dill shook her head slowly, yet there was a gleam of hope in her eye.

"If only a minister would talk to me in that way," she said; "but I am afraid you don't know. Still, you do me good; and if only you will learn this winter if any ministers believe as you do, I think it would comfort me."

"I will learn all I can, be assured of that, and you shall have the benefit of it all," said Hannah.

"Thank you," was the choking reply, and the unhappy young girl gave Hannah a parting kiss with

trembling lips. "I cannot stay to see the girls," she said. "Give my love to them, and tell them 'Good-by.' Don't forget to write. Good-by."

"Good-by, I'll not forget," answered Hannah, gazing sadly at the disappearing little figure, and wondering if she had not said just the wrong things to her, and if in this world she should ever behold her again. She left the porch, and went up to the old garret, where she found the girls sitting on the quaint blue chest. Now, that old garret was by no means the least useful or patronized part of the house, and the girls had known and realized its worth since early childhood. Here were heaps of papers, old-fashioned books, ancient and musty; but many times they had been thoroughly tumbled over, and their contents searched by curious eyes. Here was the old spinning-wheel that their mother had used in her young days, remnants of old-fashioned costume, a few curiosities from foreign shores, and a number of clean rag-bags, which made nice seats and even couches for the girls in their meditative or lazy moods. The small window at the west supplied the freshest and sweetest air on the farm, and it was sure to be cool and breezy, though the heat was often oppressive there under the low roof. Each of the girls had had her dreams here alone, and altogether they had spent here hours of blissful enjoyment, so that the old garret was destined to live forever in their memory, creating always pleasurable emotions. In the blue chest, there were their early efforts at writing, drawing, and music, — yellow manuscript, consisting of unfinished stories, melancholy strains of poetry, sketches commenced, but not ended, and one long poem called an "epic" by its author, and tied with a bit of blue ribbon, which was a sign

of the high place it once had occupied in her mind. Here also were numerous pieces of drawing paper, with life sketches upon them, — a bird, a leaf, a flower, many a face which seemed to represent some living visage; glimpses of water, pleasant nooks, old farm-houses, well-sweeps, pictures full of comic suggestions, and numerous designs, all imperfectly drawn, but displaying considerable talent and ingenuity. Scraps of *music blanks* were also here, filled with strains of music, — notes imperfectly made and blotted, accompaniments difficult and intricate, little songs, a march commenced, but unfinished, variations to some simple piece, a chant, and the hint of an anthem.

Kate and Mary had been looking them over, and packing them neatly together; and when all were in order, they had closed the chest, and sat down upon it for a little talk.

"We have been looking in the blue chest," said Kate, as Hannah made her appearance, "and we have tied everything snugly that belonged together, and we have been thinking how they will look to us years hence, when we come up here in the garret and examine them."

"I thought I would burn that old manuscript of mine, — it is such a heap of nonsense. I should be ashamed to have it read outside the family," said Hannah, sitting down in front of the girls on an old box. "What have you done with that heap of papers I left here by the chest? I was going to pack them into this box."

"They are all in there," said Mary, "but I should be afraid the rats would gnaw them."

"I care very little if they do," said Hannah. "There are only a few sketches of mine there that I

am not ashamed of. I thought of burning them all up, but finally I concluded I'd stow them away, and let them be and mould. It's a pity I ever had to write such stuff, or ever *did* do it. Somehow, if one starts on the wrong track, it's hard work to change. If I had never seen one of those sensational papers, I don't know but I should be better off, though I did try the first-class magazines, but I never could earn a cent. My great aim is to earn enough money this way to give me time and opportunity to write something better; and if that time ever comes, I'll make a bonfire of the trash I have already written."

"New York will open your heart," said Mary; "there's a good time coming, but I am opposed to the bonfire. I say keep all your old writings, just for future amusement and fun."

"They never would give me any," said Hannah; "and as to giving other people amusement in such a way as that, I have not enough generosity to do it. How long are you going to stay up here in the garret?"

"We ought not to stay another minute," said Kate, springing up from the old chest, and starting toward the stairway. "Come, let us go down-stairs, and act rational, and not be hiding ourselves out of sight. It is almost time to start."

Down into the kitchen they flew, one after the other, where the three trunks were locked and strapped, and ready to be tumbled into the wagon. Mother was busy and smiling, though the girls did not know what an anxiety the smile concealed, nor how the night before she had lain and thought until past midnight, picturing to herself every possible danger that might befall three young girls in a great city. Everything seemed so comfortable and cheery in

the kitchen. The shiny tea-pot sent out an inviting flavor, and a basket of fair yellow apples on the table spoke of plenty, and peace too; while the tea-kettle sung blithely, and a cricket chirped under the hearth. It would have been strange if this pretty home picture had not met with appreciation in the young girls' hearts, and held up to their fancy a cheerless room in the city. Why should they go, after all? Wasn't it foolish to leave such a sweet, peaceful home, where they could live in happy retirement, supplied with all the necessaries of life? What could they expect to find in the world better or more satisfying? Why not settle down, and be content to do like the other girls of their acquaintance, sew and knit, and crochet tidies, collars, and edging; help about the house-work, and read newspapers, and now and then a book? Why couldn't they be content? There were many charms at home. The fine rosewood piano, procured through Mary's exertion and her father's kindness and generosity, was a great charm of itself. Then there was the game of chess, which they often played in the long winter evenings; their slight knowledge of embroidery, and the merry and mysterious preparations for Christmas. Was it not almost a sin in them to leave so much from discontent, and go into a strange place to rely wholly upon themselves?

Thoughts similar to these passed like a flash through their minds, as they looked into the cozy, warm kitchen, and saw its comforts and enjoyments.

"Yes, blessings brighten as they take their flight," Hannah said to herself; but she was heard distinctly by Kate, who gave the strap on her trunk an extra jerk, as if to make sure that it was sufficiently secured, and then proceeded to lay the cloth for supper without making any reply.

"Go, now, girls, and change your dresses," said mother; "you ought to start certainly in half an hour. I will have supper ready when you come down, and then the wagon will be ready."

Reluctantly the girls obeyed; and in the great chamber together they donned the dresses which had been altered and remodeled for the occasion, plain, but neat and becoming. Somehow they dressed in a flutter of excitement, for the time was drawing so very near; and after all, how should they make out? what should they do? Mary's teeth actually chattered, which could not have been owing altogether to the weather, though it was a little chilly, and her voice trembled with excitement.

"O dear," she exclaimed, "where *is* my collar? I laid it just here on the stand. Who *has* seen it?"

"Where are your eyes?" asked Kate. "There's the collar in plain sight."

"Well, I'm just stupid, and its *awful* cold. Do, Hannah, shut that window," said Mary, trying with tremulous hands to fasten her collar. "This pin is such an old-fashioned thing; but then it is pure gold, that is one consolation."

"Don't work over that pin any longer," said Kate. "Do see if I have tied this ribbon well on my neck, and see if you think my dress really seems too short."

"Not a bit," said Mary, taking a survey. "I should think it just the style from what I read about the last fashions; and the bow is all right."

"Girls, are you ready?" called mother from the foot of the stairs.

"Almost," answered Hannah, with her mouth full of pins.

They went down to the kitchen soon, and took their

accustomed seats at the table. Everything was so fresh and good, — the golden butter and cheese, and the huge doughnuts, and soft, new bread. How longingly in the future they would look back to this meal! They ate almost in silence, or tried to eat, but somehow they were too full, and the food choked them. They tried to drink the tea which mother insisted would do them good; but it was too hot, they said, and left it almost untasted. Father took occasion to give a few more words of caution to the numberless ones which he had already said.

"Be sure and not trust to strangers," he said, it seemed for the twentieth time. "No matter how kind a person may seem, or how respectable he may look, don't trust him till you know something about him; and remember fine clothes often form the dress of a villain. Look out for your money, and don't get careless after a while, and think there is no danger. That is just the time people get their pockets picked. Go together as much as possible, and don't go out much evenings. Don't rely upon any one to point out the way to you, but a policeman. Keep it fresh in your minds continually that no stranger is to be trusted, and don't be careless about crossing the streets."

This he said, and much more similar to it; and the girls, though they listened respectfully, and said "yes," and "we will," etc., over and over, thought, after all, that the advice was hardly necessary, as they should be careful enough with what little money they had, and never trust a stranger. The boy who was to take them to the depot cracked his whip impatiently, the trunks were placed in the express-wagon, and the girls hurried on their shawls and hats, drew on their gloves hastily, and were all ready to say good-by.

"Remember all I have told you," said mother, still smiling, "especially about your health; and if you are in want of anything, don't hesitate about telling of it, for we can contrive some way to help you."

"Be sure and get your trunks checked, and don't lose the checks," said father.

They were in the wagon at last; and as the horse started onward they looked behind them, choked back the tears, said good-by, and were gone.

## CHAPTER V.

### IN NEW YORK.

"SAFE so far," said Kate, dropping into a chair.

"What a strange little room!" said Mary.

"Climbing four flights of stairs is enough to exhaust a person," said Hannah, drawing a very long sigh, and sitting on the edge of a little white bed.

"Well, what do you think of our new quarters? How do you like appearances?" asked Kate.

"I am so glad to get by ourselves once more, that I'm not capable of judging yet. I thought one while we never should get here," said Hannah, pulling off her gloves. "I knew cities were confusing, but I never supposed they would make one deaf and dumb and blind before. Once I thought we should surely get separated and lost; and I wanted to give Mary a good shaking, she stopped and gazed so much. All at once I would miss her, and then would wait and look, and grow frightened, and at last espy her completely absorbed in looking at some silly thing."

"Well, if anybody could have avoided looking at that monkey, I would like to see the person. It actually had on a blue velvet basque, and it brought its cap to me for a penny," said Mary.

"And of course you put one in," laughed Kate. "That is one of the ways to spend money."

"Yes, I did give him a penny; he was so cunning,

I couldn't refuse," said Mary, going to the window and looking out into the street. "O, we've got a splendid view," she said. "There is a man selling newspapers in a little hovel. It is so high, up here, it almost makes me dizzy to look down. Do see that car! it looks for all the world, viewed from here, like a great mud-turtle creeping along. I shall like this."

"I am so tired," said Kate, "that I can't take another step at present, and I do believe my feet are blistered. I should think we walked at least three miles out of our way, and lost our way twenty times or more."

"Let us take off our shoes, and lie down and rest us a while," said Hannah. "It seems to me I never was so tired before in all my life. Why, we were up at four o'clock this morning. Don't you feel tired, Mary?"

"Tired?" said Mary, turning away from the window, and putting on an exhausted look. "Now I have time to think of it, yes,—entirely 'done out,' as Debby Pike says; and I don't doubt in the least but that my feet are blistered; and my eyes,—why, they feel as though they were full of pins; and my head,—well, you can't imagine how that aches."

"There are three little beds," said Hannah, "one apiece. Mine will be first, Kate's in the middle, and Mary's against the wall. Let us take them for sofas, lie down upon them, and then take a 'bird's-eye view' of the surroundings."

"Agreed!" said Mary, taking off her boots with amazing quickness, throwing her hat one side, and dropping her head on the hair pillow with a long-drawn breath.

"Mercy, girls! what do you call this?" she ex-

claimed, as soon as her head touched the pillow. "Harder than a brickbat! Kate, what is this, anyhow? Not feathers certain, and not straw either: what then is it?"

The pillows were thoroughly examined.

"I should call them decidedly flat at least," said Kate; "and there is no shaking them up."

"They are hair-pillows, I suppose," said Hannah; "and for my part, if I can find any place to lay my head at present, I shall not complain."

"But they are so decidedly comical," said Mary. "No doubt but that we could rest on the floor to-day;" and down the three heads dropped on the hard pillows, three sighs mingled together, and then they were ready for a talk.

The room, which had been procured for them before they went to the city, was a small affair, and for furniture contained only three chairs, three single beds, a wash-stand, a little table, and a stove. The street which it overlooked was a respectable one, though exceedingly noisy and bustling. The house was let by a man who had a friend in the vicinity of the girl's home, and through him the room had been procured. It was on the fourth floor; and though it was tedious to climb the four flights of stairs, yet when it was done, the air was found to be clearer, purer, and sweeter than below, and from the windows one could look over the great city and get a glimpse of the ocean, flecked with white sails. As the three girls are such inveterate talkers, I shall leave further description of their new situation for them to explain in conversation.

"A short time ago, and a long time ago, we were dreaming of this hour, and time at last has brought it along, and here we are in the great bewildering city, I should think about in the centre," said Hannah.

"Bewildering! yes, that is just the word," said Mary. "I believe it would take a century to see all the sights, if one kept steadily looking all the time."

"I keep thinking of 'Tom Brown's' visit here, the result of which John G. Saxe sung about, and I begin to realize the truth of what he says about the city."

"What is it? I don't remember," said Mary.

"I don't recollect the first few lines of the stanza, but I remember these: —

> 'Indeed, I'll be bound that if Nature and Art
> (Though the former, being older, has gotten the start)
> In some new Crystal Palace of suitable size
> Should show their chefs d'œuvre, and contend for the prize,
> The latter would prove when it came to the scratch,
> Whate'er you may think, no contemptible match.
> For should old Mrs. Nature endeavor to stagger her,
> By presenting at last her majestic Niagara,
> Miss Art would produce an equivalent work
> In her great, overwhelming, unfinished New York.'"

"We shall realize the truth of those words more fully after we have been here at least a day or two," said Kate. "Isn't the stove a minute affair?"

"Everything is minute in these quarters," said Mary; "and when our trunks arrive, there will be very little spare room left. We shall have to walk around on the beds, chairs, and trunks."

"What would everybody say at home if they knew just where we are now?" asked Hannah.

"Nothing very agreeable, probably," said Kate; "but there is one thing to encourage us. Though we have very little money, limited wardrobes, and this little bare room to live in, the whole city is ours as far as sight goes, and we can enjoy and learn a great deal for nothing."

"Yes, and I am willing, for one, to live in close quarters, and dress exceedingly plain for such a privilege," said Hannah.

"I am too," said Mary, "because no one will know anything about it here, and we can do just as we like."

"A great advantage over a village or small town, and I am glad we are here," said Kate; "but if we don't learn any more than Emily Lawson did when she spent a winter here, we shall have our labor for our pains. During the whole time she was here, she didn't go into the streets once alone, she said; and all she could talk about were theatres, and those she had a very superficial knowledge of."

"Yes, and she said to me when I expressed a desire to see New York's many curiosities, — 'I felt just so when I first went there; but you won't see much, after all. I don't know much more about New York than I did before I went there, and you won't either. The fact is, it is a real task to get around the city, and find an escort whenever you want one; besides, when one is where she feels that she can go if she likes, she has less desire to do so, and postpones everything till the time comes to leave the city, and then she regrets that she didn't make greater efforts to look around.' I said to myself then that *we* would be our own escorts, and go wherever we desired, not asking the consent or opinion of any one; but of course I didn't say a word of it to her."

"No one disturbed us to-day, did they?" said Mary seriously, "but every one was exceedingly kind and obliging, I thought, — all but the old apple-women. They did nothing but mutter, and I'm sure I couldn't understand a word they said. No one made any attempts to pick our pockets or impose upon us, and I don't feel half so afraid as I thought I should."

"I had no time to think of anything but the noise

and confusion. What a thundering racket those stages make, rattling over the stones, and the great carts, loaded with vegetables and everything else! Why, really a person can't think in the street," said Kate.

"What kind of people do you suppose live in this house?" asked Mary in a half whisper.

"Respectable ones, Mr. Arms said; that is as far as my curiosity goes at present," answered Hannah. "There is a notice outside that says, 'Rooms let with and without board.' I hope no one will disturb us, and that is all I ask of them since I know they are respectable, which knowledge makes me feel easy. Do you think, girls, we could ever go to sleep here so long as that noise was kept up in the street?"

"It seems impossible now," said Kate, "but people must necessarily get accustomed to it, else New York would be a sleepless place."

"Which I think quite probable," answered Hannah.

"I like my bed best of any," Mary said, abruptly changing the subject. "I can look out of the window as I lie here, and see the corner of the street, and that stand of apples and oranges, and the tops of people's heads as they pass along; so my bed is last, but not least."

"I like my bed best," said Hannah, "because I *can't* see the dusty, noisy street, but can look straight up into the sky; and how delightful it will be at night to watch the stars, and perhaps at times to get a glimpse of the moon!"

"I like my bed best, because it is protected on both sides by two brave knights, and I can lie in all safety, and look over the tops of the buildings, and see the great tossing, billowy ocean, besides looking at the sky when I choose," said Kate.

"I can see the ocean also," said Hannah.

"And I can see both ocean and sky," said Mary.

"It is fortunate that we are all satisfied," said Hannah, in a tone which was growing drowsy in spite of the clatter in the streets.

"Which shows," answered Kate, "that possessions need not necessarily be the same in order to satisfy the possessors."

The sentences grew shorter, and the intervals between them longer, until closed eyes and regular breathing announced that all three had fallen asleep, though the commotion in the street grew no less, and notwithstanding their belief that sleep was impossible when noise was so prevalent. The night before, which was spent on a steamer, their slumbers had been broken and disturbed; besides, at four o'clock they had arisen, and gone to the outer deck to watch for the great city which they were rapidly approaching; and then their long walk on the pavements had wearied them to exhaustion, and they slept soundly.

For several hours they slept on, and at last were roused by a loud pounding on their door. They all started up in a trice, and looked at each other in bewilderment. The noise of the streets buzzed into their ears as soon as awakened, and the pounding on the door was continued.

"O, it is the trunks," said Hannah at last, rubbing her eyes and springing toward the door.

She was right, and the three little trunks were soon tumbled into the room, and quiet again restored.

"O, dear, I am hungry," said Mary. "Let us open the trunk, and get out some of the cold chicken."

"No, don't let us eat that the very first day," said Hannah, as she unstrapped one of the trunks, and pro-

ceeded to unlock it ; "besides, it's not time for supper yet, and you know we must commence with some regularity in our meals, or we shall all get the dyspepsia, just as mother said."

"There's one thing certain, and that is I shall have dyspepsia very shortly if I don't have something to eat. Talk about supper! We haven't had any regular dinner yet," said Mary, looking with longing eyes at the bundles of food Hannah took from the trunks.

"Well, let us have some boiled eggs, and bread and butter. Don't you think that will be good, Kate?" asked Hannah.

"As for me," said Kate, "I could eat anything, even raw codfish ; so don't consult my wishes, but bring along anything there is there. It is all excellent, thanks to mother."

"Well, I'll give up the chicken if I can get anything else," said Mary. "Shall we set the table?"

"Yes, here is the cloth ; spread it on the table. We might as well commence being orderly first as last," said Hannah, as she rolled out the boiled eggs, and bread and butter.

"Apples for dessert," she continued, taking out three red-cheeked Baldwins and placing them in the centre of the table. "Now don't be bashful, but take hold and help yourselves ; we don't stop for ceremonies here."

"Thank you," said Kate ; "it is well you don't, for you would be obliged to stop some time before they would come, I fear. What shall we do after supper, — go into the street?"

"Yes, do let us, if we can ever find our way back again. I dread roaming all over everywhere, and getting frightened at last," said Mary, picking at the shell of an egg.

"I ought to go to Cooper's this very day," said Kate, "and see if I can attend the School of Design. Of course I can, but I want to feel settled and commence work as soon as possible. There isn't any time to lose, you know."

"Have you any idea which way it is from here, or how far?" asked Hannah.

"Not the least," replied Kate, "but a policeman will tell us. We must find it sometime, you know, and why not to-night?"

"We might go and learn the way," suggested Hannah, "and go in or not as we like. For my part, I think we ought to have this day to rest in."

"Well, then, we will only walk out for pleasure, and just see how Cooper's looks," said Kate. "I am wonderfully rested."

"So am I," said Hannah; "and this evening, when we return, we will write home, and I shall then consider the day well spent."

"Now, Mary, don't keep me continually looking after you when we get in the street," said Hannah, as she locked the door after they had left their room, having started for their walk. "Keep at my elbow, and if there is anything you want to stop and see, nudge me, and I'll stop; but don't be lingering and loitering when I know nothing about it, for there is danger of getting separated. There is such a crowd passing and repassing all the time it is enough to scatter the wits of any one. I don't know what to do with this key. What shall I? If I put it in my pocket, I may lose it, or somebody may pick it out; there's no dependence."

"Pin it in," said Kate, "and I'll risk it. Here is a large pin."

The key was secured, and the girls passed on through the long hall, down the four flights of stairs, and were soon on the pavement.

"Isn't it lively?" whispered Mary, clinging to Hannah's sleeve as commanded.

"I wonder if we appear like green country girls," said Kate, "and if we act anything like the country girls we read about."

"It isn't easy to judge of our own actions correctly, but really I think we act quite respectably," said Hannah.

"Nearly all the ladies glance at the shop windows or stop to look in them; and if they didn't, what would be the use of the display? and we only do that, you know."

"They don't play tricks on girls as on men," said Mary, "or else we might look out for pocket-books dropped in our way.

"It seems to me girls are much safer in the city than boys," said Hannah, "notwithstanding most people's different opinions. We are not tempted to enter mock auction rooms, as honest Tom Brown was, and all the gilded saloons in the city could not induce us to take a glass of liquor; and yet people are all crying out on every side of a girl who goes into the city, the dangers, and risks, and inconsistencies of such a course. For my part, I don't believe it was originally designed for women to be conventuals; but I do believe, if they really desire it, they can make their mark in the world, and, if possible, I shall confirm my belief by experience."

"No one seems to take any notice of us," said Mary; "and how can there be any danger when there are so many people on every side of us?"

"I suppose there is danger everywhere," said Kate, "and it is our business to avoid it. If we took no precautions, we might all be run over by some of these great lumbering teams; and even at home we might get burned up if we didn't keep out of the fire. The fact is, girls, we must keep our eyes open, or we shall be sure to fall into danger. Isn't it nice that we neither smoke, nor drink wine, nor play billiards, nor have any desire to do either?"

"It is a mercy," said Hannah; "and if we don't get infatuated with fashion and dress, we shall undoubtedly go on briskly."

"We shall not be likely to do that, for we have no money to spend in that way; so I think we are safe there," said Kate.

"It is a temptation," said Mary, "to see so many pretty things, and so many women in becoming costumes; for one would like to look pretty."

"Yes, but when we reason on the subject, we find it is much more to our advantage as regards happiness, convenience, health, and comfort, to clothe our minds with beauties which can never escape us," said Hannah. "The study of dress and fashion must be a very shallow enjoyment, and give people a great deal of uneasiness, especially if their purse is light."

"There is time enough for us," said Kate, "when we make our fortunes; then I'm to have a black velvet dress, you know."

And so the girls talked and walked, and often a policeman turned, when Hannah lightly touched his arm, to behold three pairs of bright eyes looking innocently into his face while inquiries were made. Cooper Institute was pointed out to them at last, that great building, so suggestive of human benevolence and appreciation of the wants and needs of the people.

"I believe," said Kate, looking at the building with shining eyes, — "I believe I feel enough gratitude for that building and its advantages, to pay for its erection. I really feel like expressing my gratitude to Mr. Cooper personally; but I suppose it would only trouble him. Are such men and their benevolent acts appreciated?"

"No, not as they should be, I am sure," said Hannah, "though they often get applauded, and gain notoriety; but I suppose it is impossible for people to fully realize the good such a building as this does to generation after generation."

They entered the Institute, and roamed about from one room to another, taking note of everything they saw, and becoming bewildered as they wandered upstairs and down. The reading-room was to them the chief attraction, where many men were reading the news; and though they were busy with their thoughts, they kept silent until they were again in the hall.

"I don't see why people need complain of a lack of opportunities to improve their minds, if they can visit this place," said Hannah.

"Did you notice," said Kate, "not one woman was there reading, but a large number of men? What do you think is the meaning of it?"

"Perhaps the women don't find time to go there," suggested Mary.

"A poor set of slaves they are then," said Hannah. "It seems more probable that they choose to go somewhere else, — shopping perhaps, or parading the streets; and men, you know, must keep a little posted on the news of the day, if they have any pride or self-respect."

"We are not going to allow," said Kate, "that

women haven't the ability to grow as wise as men, nor that they have no natural taste for knowledge and literature, until we have proved our own powers thoroughly; so it becomes necessary to devise some reason for the absence of women from the public libraries and reading-rooms, besides a natural disinclination to visit such places."

"False education," said Mary. "Wouldn't I have been just as uninterested in these matters, and just as interested in dress and all the pretty things of a fashionable life, as the most insipid you can find, had I been bred in luxury, and taught that to work was a disgrace to a girl, and making herself attractive and getting a rich husband must be her one aim in life?"

"It might have been so with us all, and I think Mary has the right key to the mystery," said Hannah; "and it is such a pity that women are so educated. They surely cannot enjoy life so well as they otherwise would; and how grateful we should be that we are bred to higher aims and objects!"

"I think," said Kate, "we are a great help and strength to each other, and one alone would be much more liable to fall. Now we talk these subjects over and over, which causes us to think more and more; and in time perhaps we shall become strong enough to stand alone against the temptations and allurements of the whole world."

"What a delightful picture that calls to my mind!" said Hannah.

This conversation was carried on as they descended side by side the long, heavy stairs. When they found themselves in the street again, they were undecided which way to turn, and the twilight was stealing on. No policeman was in sight, as is often the case when most needed.

"Let us ask a woman," said Mary. "I think it is safe to ask women the way, and there is one who looks good-natured."

A corpulent, broad-faced woman drew near; but after several vain attempts to make her understand, as she proved to be very deaf, the girls gave up all hope, and with red faces passed on.

"This is a warning never to make inquiries of fat old women," said Kate.

"It was too comical for me to keep quiet," said Mary. "I had hard work to keep from bursting out laughing to see you two trying to make her hear, first one and then the other."

"Yes, I knew you were behind us tittering. It's a wonder the old lady didn't keep us screaming to her an hour or so. I was really afraid she would," said Hannah.

After several adventures similar to this, they found themselves well on their way home, congratulating each other on their good luck.

"I hope we are near home," said Mary, after they had walked a considerable distance, "for it is getting dark, and look! there is a man lighting a street lamp. I wish — only for the danger — that we could stay out until all the lamps are lighted, just to see the effect."

"Some evening we can, when better acquainted," said Hannah, and they hurried on.

"Good evening, misses," said a man at Kate's elbow.

They all looked up, and perceived that they had never seen the man before, and understood the situation at once.

"I must say something to him," whispered Kate;

"I cannot resist the temptation;" and so she said in the most cutting, sarcastic tone possible, —

"Let us alone, if you please, sir; we neither know you nor wish to know you."

A moment after this, they glanced behind them, but he had vanished.

"The impudent thing!" said Hannah. "It does one good to speak up to them so; but they say it is better not to notice them at all."

"He has left us, any way," said Kate, "and that is all we ask of him."

"He may follow us slyly and rob us," said Mary.

"O fie!" laughed Kate. "I'm not afraid of him, and it's not the least consequence; and here we are at home, so there is no more danger or cause for fear."

A couple was ascending the steps before them, — an old lady dressed in black, and a young man leaning upon her arm. He seemed feeble, and ascended very slowly; and at last, turning his head, the girls caught sight of a very thin, pale face, and large mournful eyes.

"Poor boy!" sighed Mary.

"Mother and son, no doubt, and if so, he has the best of care."

"But what a sad, pitiful face he has!" whispered Hannah. "It is intelligent, too. I shall be haunted with it now for a long time. I wonder if they are poor, and if he has consumption."

"I hope not," said Kate; "perhaps he is recovering from some fever."

"His eyes looked as though his soul was full of poetry," said Mary. "I hope we shall meet him some time."

They entered the hall just after the interesting

couple, and, ascending three flights of stairs, saw them enter a room just beneath their own and close the door after them; then they climbed another flight, and, when in their own room, soon lay down upon their little beds to rest, for they were very tired.

## CHAPTER VI.

### ADVERTISING.

The second day in New York was to the three sisters a day of work. They could not afford to be idle when there was so much to be accomplished, so many hopes to beckon them on, so much dependent upon their exertions. They expected no ease or idle pleasure; their object was to benefit themselves and prepare for future usefulness: yet there is no heart so prescient as fully to comprehend what it has anticipated, except through a thorough realization of the anticipation; and though they knew trials and disappointments must overtake them, yet they could not understand or discern how very disheartened and weary they would become as the days advanced.

They went to work, therefore, with brave hearts, and a determination to overcome all obstacles. Their means were limited, and they were therefore obliged to make the increase of them their first consideration. However anxious they might be to commence their studies and observations at once, and go on improving without interruption, their desires could not be gratified; but they must build the ladder as they climbed, and they commenced with willing hands and hopeful hearts. And so when the morning light stole in upon the little white beds, and the busy stir had commenced in the streets, three pairs of eyes opened one after the

other, three hearts gave sudden bounds of recognition of things around them after an instant's bewilderment, and then the tongues were loosed, and the thoughts busy.

Full of hope and ambition, they arose and prepared themselves for a day of activity. One little looking-glass was all they had in which to view their bright faces; but the eyes were keen and sparkling, and a few glances were sufficient to show them that they were presentable, though their ornaments were few and modest. The noise and bustle in the street excited and animated them; they had never been where there was so much commotion before, so much hurry and confusion; and the sound of many feet upon the pavement below was to them an incitement; for were not numberless people busy and active, and are not we influenced by that which is going on around us?

The time, however, was destined to come to them when the continuous tramp and hurry in the streets would discourage instead of animate, would weary instead of excite; for the strongest and bravest, who are striving for high and worthy attainments, must find shadows as well as sunshine along their way. They ate their breakfasts in the liveliest and brightest moods, and declared they had never felt better appetites at home when there were hot coffee and toast to tempt them.

After the meal was finished, and the things cleared away, Hannah procured paper and pen, saying, "Now for the advertisement."

Advertising, it is said, is the key to wealth and worldly distinction. It is certainly an avenue through which unknown persons may make their desires known to the public, and gain people's attention and interest.

The three sisters had little money, but much faith; no experience, but great hopes and tireless energy; and though they tried to anticipate many failures, yet they could not but believe that the advertisement, which they could hardly afford, would bring to Mary a sufficient number of scholars to insure her a *living*, at least, in the city.

"Now," said Hannah, taking a seat by the table, "now we must have the 'Herald' to look at. I have been told that that is the paper to advertise in."

"Well, then, I will go down to the stand below here and get one," said Mary. "It will be a good time to get out into the street alone. I want to try it."

"You don't think you would get lost, do you?" asked Kate.

"No indeed, how could I?" said Mary, preparing to go down.

"Don't linger, and forget everything but the 'sights,'" said Hannah. "I will stay at the window and watch for you, and see you buy the paper at the stand, and also if you start the right way to come back again."

Mary started bravely on her way; but her heart beat faster when she reached the street and passed along with hurrying feet to the first corner, then on to the second, where was the news-stand on which the window of their room looked, and from which Hannah watched for the trim, little figure in gray poplin, half afraid some harm would come to the child, she said, even in that little walk; but Mary was successful, and with the damp sheet of the "Herald" in her hand, walked around the corner again without stopping to look into the showy shop windows, though the temptation was strong to do so. She entered the house safely,

and the girls in their room were soon much surprised to see the door burst open, and Mary fly through with her face flushed and expressive of great excitement.

"O dear, I'm just mortified beyond description," she said, flinging the "Herald" on the table and herself into a chair. "I have just disgraced myself, and I don't see what makes me blunder so. I really thought I had got up four flights of stairs, and so I must rush into the room just below this and make a dunce of myself. As soon as I unlatched the door, I must scream out, 'All safe! here's the paper; now for the advertisement;' and then looking in, there sat the pale young man, looking at me with his great melancholy eyes, and a smile about his lips; while I was so completely amazed, I stopped still an instant and looked straight into his face, and then, as if I had never been taught a particle of politeness, I rushed away, slammed the door, and here I am. O dear! these horrid houses, with so many flights of stairs!"

"Was he the young man we saw with his mother last night?" asked Hannah.

"Yes, of course; I knew him in an instant," answered Mary, "and I am *so* ashamed of myself."

"Well, you are not to blame," said Kate, "though I should have thought you would have apologized."

"So should I," said Mary; "and he must think me so very green, or silly, or something. Suppose I should go down now and apologize. Is it too late?"

"I think it better to let it pass by now. We want to avoid making any acquaintances, and so the least said the better; you have done him no injury, and he will understand it to be a mistake, and will excuse you," said Hannah. "How did it look in his room — anything like ours?"

"O no, not at all. I don't know one thing it contained; only there was more room, and it had a cozy look. I could see nothing but the pale face and great brown eyes of the young man, and I do pity him."

"So do I," said Kate; "but don't let us get interested; we can't afford it. If we don't concentrate our minds wholly on the object for which we left home and came to the city, we shall surely miss of acquiring it. I am going to Cooper's, and alone too, and you may write the advertisement. I shall be no help to you."

After some discussion about the propriety of Kate's going alone, and a decision that she could safely do so, Hannah and Mary commenced the study of the advertising sheet of the "Herald."

"Good-by, girlies," said Kate, with her hands on the door-knob; "don't go to the 'Herald' office till I come back, and don't worry about me in the least, for I can take care of myself. I want to see the advertisement before it goes into the paper."

"Don't stay long, then," said Mary; "and do be careful and count the flights of stairs when you come back. I have a mind to carry a card with me after now, and keep an account as I rise."

"Don't lose yourself in thought while in the street," said Hannah; "and when you display those drawings, don't act as though you were ashamed of them. I think they are good. Good-by; come back as soon as possible."

"Now," said Mary, as soon as Kate had gone, "here is an advertisement that suits me pretty well."

"That is very good," said Hannah, reading it; "and I will now write one, and then we will see how it sounds." There was a silence for some time, while

Hannah thought and Mary read; and at last with a long breath Hannah announced that she had written something, but she didn't suppose it was good; whereupon she proceeded to read it. It ran thus: —

"A thorough and competent teacher of music would like to obtain a few scholars. She will be faithful in her instructions and reasonable in her charges. Address, W. M., 'Herald' office."

"Well," said Mary, after she had heard it for the fourth time, "that is probably as well as we can do. I wish I could get at least eight scholars; that would help us all a good deal."

"We will see what can be done, or what this advertisement will do," said Hannah, as she copied it carefully in preparation for its appearance in the columns of the "Herald."

Kate was absent until nearly noon; and her sisters had begun to grow somewhat uneasy, when they heard her decisive step in the hall, and very shortly she stood before them, smiling and apparently well satisfied.

"What luck?" asked Mary the first thing.

"Excellent," answered Kate; "I had no trouble at all in the street, and was very pleasantly received at the Institute, and shall commence my lessons there tomorrow. My sketches were pronounced *very good;* and I am so much encouraged and feel so free, now it is all settled. I went in among the alcoves, where the busts and easels were; and I know it is a delightful place to draw."

"I wonder if we can't go in some day," said Hannah. "I knew your sketches would be considered good."

It was afternoon when the three girls started for

the "Herald" office; and the merchant who sends in his advertisement to the amount of a thousand dollars, does not feel it of such importance as did they the slip of paper on which was only a few lines, costing them only fifty cents per day.

"Dear me! I'm afraid I shall meet the pale young man," said Mary, drawing her veil closely over her face. "I couldn't endure to see him; so let us hurry out of the hall as soon as possible."

It was a long walk down to the "Herald" office; but the distance seemed short to the girls, who took note of all around them, and chattered merrily on the way. At one of the advertising windows they left the slip of paper, and the clerk smiled, and took the fifty cents; and with great expectations, they turned their steps homeward.

"Only one letter!" said Mary despondingly, on her return from the "Herald" office, whither she had gone to hear from her advertisement. She threw the letter on the table, and looked the very picture of discouragement. "That's all the good advertising does. I expected at least a dozen letters, and have received only just one, and that is of no consequence. I only read the first line, which informs me that my services are not required, but only my attention for a moment."

"Maybe the letter is of some consequence; you don't know, if you haven't read it," said Hannah, drawing the letter from the envelope, and unfolding it.

"What consequence can it be," said Kate, "if it brings her no scholars? If advertising will do no good what will? We have no influence, no acquaintances, and no recommendations."

Here was a disappointment, so soon after their ar-

rival; and the girls sat a moment and looked at each other in silence. "Let us see what this one letter says; perhaps there is some encouragement in it," said Hannah.

She read it aloud and here is a copy of it: —

"NEW YORK, *October 5th.*

"W. M., — I do not address you to obtain your services, but your attention for a few moments. This morning, in looking over the advertising sheet of the 'Herald,' I noticed your advertisement, and was particularly attracted toward it. The reason for the attraction is unknown to me, as the advertisement is exceedingly commonplace, and gives no hint whether you are young or old, in comfortable or trying circumstances. However, I am through some means impressed that you are a young lady with little experience, and that is why I address you with a few words of advice. I think from my experience in advertising that this is the only letter you will receive at the 'Herald' office; and if you are anxious to obtain scholars, you must make your desire known to the public in a more attractive manner. You must offer some inducement. Place your terms a little below the common price, and you will be noticed.

"I thought that by writing there might be a possibility of doing you a favor; and if my suggestion is not needed, it surely will do no harm. If you should wish to ask me for any information or favor, address

"A. B., Box 320."

"Well!" exclaimed Hannah, dropping the letter in her lap.

"Indeed!" said Kate, in the tone she always used when suddenly struck with surprise.

"If I had mistrusted what the letter contained, I should have read it long ago," said Mary, throwing aside somewhat her despondent air.

"Who knows but this may be worth the dozen letters expected?" said Hannah.

"Perhaps," said Kate; "but what a mystery! It is well-timed advice, and how near he guessed Mary's circumstances! He must be a man of wonderful impressions."

"A man? how do you know that?" asked Mary. "It may have been written by a woman."

"I never thought of it's being a woman," said Hannah, looking the letter over again, "but it may be: however, it doesn't seem like one."

"I have no idea it is a woman," said Kate. "It neither seems like a woman to write it, nor sounds like a woman's composition. The writer is no doubt a man, and he has made an excellent suggestion."

"And why didn't we think of it before? Here we were discouraged about advertising, just because we were not keen enough to write a suitable advertisement. This shows how often failures come from inability instead of bad luck, as we often think," said Hannah.

"Well, shall we try our luck again, on the advised plan?" asked Mary, with a lighter heart.

"Of course we are not going to give up so easily as this," said Kate.

"O dear!" said Mary, "a few moments ago I was afraid I should be obliged to go home; I can't go home any way, girls, now I have come. Something must be done. Let us write another advertisement now, and take it down for the morning's paper."

"Too late," said Hannah; "yet, as we have nothing else to do, we can write it to-night, and carry it in to-

morrow. I wanted to see if I could dispose of any of those sketches of mine, but I can't go to-night. It really makes me shiver to think of it. I begin to realize how much bravery is necessary to push our way through the world. While at home, I thought it would be a pleasure to go into the publishing houses, and talk with the publishers; but I think so no longer. I shrink from it so, and I wonder if it is all in me or if such a thing would affect any one. Do you suppose a man would have such feelings?"

"I don't know," said Kate, "but I think it doubtful. It is really harder for a woman than a man, any way. In the first place, most of the publishers or all of them are men, and they stare at a girl so, and embarrass her; but then there is no use in shrinking or dreading it."

"I know it, and I *must* overcome these feelings; but it will be exceedingly hard work, especially as I have no confidence in the sketches I have to dispose of."

"Well, it will do you good probably to make an effort even if you do not succeed, and perhaps you can find out some of the faults in your sketches, and then make improvements."

"O, I am determined to try, though I have little hope of success. When Mary is well settled, I shall commence to write; and I am determined to write something that will sell. I must, you know, or go home, and it is a kind of necessity."

"Well, if you are determined to do it, you *can* do it, there is no doubt about that," said Kate. "If the paper you write for now would only take more of your sketches, you could be quite independent; but they have so very many writers."

"O, I can't depend on that paper at all, though

the money I received from it seemed quite an income while at home, with so few expenses; but here it would not half support me, even in the economical way we are living; and there must be other ways for me than that, and I shall do all I can to find them out."

"I did not intend," said Kate, "to make any reference to my condition, until Mary was well settled; but I suppose I ought to be looking about for some kind of employment; for although my lessons at the Institute are free, thanks to Peter Cooper, yet it costs something to live; and my money will not last very long."

"For the present, though, you are safe," said Hannah; "and your chief aim should be now to learn as fast as possible; for the time will come probably when your attention will necessarily be called to earning your support. You must give all your attention to your studies now. I can't help having a hope that I can assist in supporting us all soon."

"You are generally having hopes that way," said Kate, laughing; "but we haven't come to want yet; so let us be joyful; there is time enough for despondency. Mary, what are you thinking about?"

"My advertisement, of course," said Mary, starting suddenly from the reverie into which she had fallen.

"Well, have you come to any conclusion?" asked Hannah.

"No; you are the one to conclude in the matter; but I think it very singular that this letter was written to me, and I have a curiosity to know who wrote it."

"But there is no way to learn," said Kate; "so we might as well take the advice, and drown our curiosity."

"Mine cannot be drowned," said Hannah; "and I am in favor of dropping the writer a line expressing our gratitude for his timely suggestion."

"It may not turn out well," said Kate. "It looks too much like an adventure."

"And what is the harm in adventures, if they are good ones?" asked Mary.

"But how are we to know whether they are good or not? Our motives are to learn, and fit ourselves for future usefulness; and we can't afford the time to attend to everything which comes along," said Kate.

"I know that," answered Hannah; "but somehow I feel that it might be a benefit to us to write to the author of this letter. I don't see how any harm could come from it."

"Well, I don't either," said Kate, poising her head on one side to look at the sketch she was drawing. "Neither can I see what good may come from it; but then you and Mary are the advertisers, and can do as you like."

"As that is the case," said Mary, "let us design another advertisement, and make my terms nine dollars for twenty lessons."

"Too little," said Kate.

"I know that," answered Mary; "but ten dollars is quite a common price, and according to this letter, I must make my terms low enough to induce people to engage me."

"It seems hard," said Hannah; "but we must sacrifice much in order to do anything at last."

The next morning Hannah and Mary went again to the "Herald" office; and this time their advertisement ran thus:—

"A young lady, who is a stranger in the city, in

order to obtain scholars in music, will give lessons at the reduced rate of nine dollars for twenty lessons. She is a thorough and competent teacher, and those who wish to secure her services should address W. M., 'Herald' office."

This was sure to be noticed; and the young man who took it, together with the fifty cents, smiled and told them so; adding that there would be enough letters for them the next day.

Filled with hope, they went home to their little room, to talk and make further plans. Not dull of apprehension, quick to observe and discriminate, they had already become somewhat accustomed to the city, and could find their way about the streets with considerable ease. Though unsophisticated country girls, their intelligence, shrewdness, and elevated ideas prevented them from appearing *green* or ignorant, and secured to them an independent passport through the crowded streets.

As was so hopefully expected, more than a dozen letters came in answer to the last advertisement; and Mary, dancing into the room, threw them into Hannah's lap, exclaiming, "Read, read! I could hardly wait to get home, and I ran pat against a half-dozen persons, in my haste. Now break the seals, quick."

"Fourteen letters!" said Hannah, counting them.

"There must be some hope for business," said Kate. "Do read one of them as soon as possible."

Hannah broke one seal after another, and read the letters, to the delight and amusement of them all. A half-dozen of them were good, earnest letters; the rest were doubtful. Some were exceedingly laughable, and the room rang with merry voices when they were read; others were somewhat insinuating, and were therefore treated with contempt.

"Here are six, which seem to me honest ones," said Hannah, when she had read them all; "and you will have business for a while, Mary, to answer them all and make engagements."

"You will have a task to find them all too, I imagine," said Kate, examining the letters. "Here is one from Perry Street," she continued; "and where that is, is more than I know. I must say, Mary displays more bravery thus far than I thought she would; but then it's not time to be homesick yet."

"I don't know but she will succeed better than you or I, Kate," said Hannah, "in spite of our fears to the contrary. She beats me now in finding her way around the city."

"You are good for making acknowledgments at least," said Mary, looking over the six letters carefully. "Six scholars at nine dollars a piece will be fifty-four dollars for ten weeks, or five dollars and forty cents per week. A pretty good income, isn't it?"

"How fortunate we are, thus far!" said Kate.

The next day after the reception of these letters, Mary called at the places where she thought there would be hope of obtaining scholars; and among the six which she felt so sure of obtaining she engaged only four. Somewhat disappointed that all had not proved *bonâ fide*, yet after all delighted with her success, she walked briskly homeward deep in thought, and anxious to tell her adventures and experiences to her sisters. At the foot of the steps she again saw the young man with the pale face and great melancholy eyes, leaning on the arm of the old woman who had been pronounced by the girls his mother.

"Let me rest a moment," she heard the young man say. "I can't climb those steps now, I am so weary."

Mary forgot her embarrassment in her pity and sympathy for the invalid; and quite unlike her usual diffident and bashful manner, she stopped, and said respectfully, "Can I render you any assistance?"

"Thanks for your kindly offer," said the old lady in the tone of a gentlewoman. "My son, I fear, has walked a little too far for his strength. If you would give him your arm, it would assist him much in ascending the steps."

"I will do so with pleasure," said Mary, stepping to the side of the young man and offering her arm. He rested his hand, as slender and white as her own, upon it, smiling and thanking her feebly. Slowly they ascended the steps, Mary's heart gathering more and more sympathy, as the hand upon her arm trembled slightly; and the old woman said in a tender motherly tone, as if talking to a child; "We will rest in the hall, Davie, and we are almost there."

In the hall the young man sat down to rest before attempting the first flight of stairs. He seemed exhausted, and closed his great beautiful eyes; and Mary glanced at him in timid pity, received again the old woman's thanks, and then fled to her room.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PLYMOUTH CHURCH.

Sunday morning never fails to make its appearance every seventh day, no matter what is the state of affairs in village or nation. Its pleasant peaceful light steals up from the eastern hills, and spreads itself out like a benediction over city and country, exposing the want and shame and misery in the dens of the busy towns, as well as the purity and glory of Nature's delightful country.

This Sabbath morning of which I speak dawned with all the beauty and sweetness that October in her happiest mood can give. The group of maples on the Windsor farm appeared in their brightest array, and stood up in their brilliant robes against a sky rosy with the tints of the expected sun.

The hidden nooks of the old orchard began to grow visible; and the delicate ferns, cooled and dried by the night's brisk breeze, looked as fresh and bright as on the summer mornings long passed away. The old farmhouse, hedged in with apple-trees, stood still and gave no sign of the absence of the three young hearts which for years had awakened on these blessed mornings to greet the quiet Sabbath with throbs of peace and happiness. It told no tales, unless by its uncommon stillness, of the lone old chamber where the quilts were smooth upon the beds, and the snowy pillows, unpressed

by placid cheeks, and free from tangled hair, looked stiff and cheerless. It spoke neither of the mother's daily visits to this dear old room, hushed and silent, disturbed no more by the merry laughs of her happy girls, nor of the tender light of her mild eye as she patted a pillow complacently, or stooped over the little vase of dried asters, with a prayer for her absent daughters. The gleaming white church on the hill, with its silent bell poised in the quaint steeple, was kissed all over by the coming sunlight; and Adonijah, thus early in his Sunday suit, sat on the rough rails of a pair of bars not many rods away, and whittled dexterously at a piece of pine, his heart drinking in the stillness and beauty around him, though his uncultivated mind could not form his vague thoughts and feelings into the fullest and highest appreciation of the picturesque scenery around him, and the sweet, divine influence of the dawning Sabbath, that seemed to permeate every leaf and flower.

At an open window, behind a row of maples, appeared a little pale sad face with golden locks streaming down on either side, and pensive gray eyes peering through the gay rustling foliage toward the brightening east, where the sun was coming up in all his pageantry and pride. It was Dill, kneeling there in her snowy night-robe, longing for that peace to fill her heart which breathed so sweetly in all around her.

Nature strove to drive all fears away by her teachings of peace and simplicity; but the cold, hard teachings of man refused to withhold its impressions, and so the innocent young heart, which should have been filled with the most joyful emotions, throbbed painfully against its iron bars, catching glimpses of the fair sunshine of simple holiness, but unable to lift the latch of the iron gate.

The little blue-veined hands were clasped on the window-sill, and the delicately moulded ear caught the low peculiar whistle of Adonijah, whittling on the bars. She knew just where he sat, — though she could not discover him through the maples, — for many a Sabbath morning before he had sat there in the same listless manner, whistling very soft and low some quaint old hymn, and whittling absently at a stick of pine.

Across the great square field, scattered here and there with brown and golden leaves, Sally bustled about in the cool milk-room, skimming the milk, and piling the pans into heaps to be washed. The coming up of the great sun was not to her a scene of wonder and admiration, but only an incitement to labor the faster, that the work might be "out of the way" in good season.

Everything was viewed from a stand-point so matter-of-fact and worldly wise that —

> "God might have made the earth bring forth
> Enough for great and small,
> The oak-tree and the cedar-tree
> Without a flower at all,"

without deducting a particle from Sally's desires or happiness. The cool blue asters by the well she had flung away because troublesome, she said; and the sprigs of golden-rod, which 'Nijah with vague appreciation dropped upon the white pine table, she threw from the window with unappreciative ejaculations, and gave no thought to the glorious golden beauty of that fair October Sabbath.

And so, while everything was so still and sweet and beautiful on and around the Windsor farm, there was apparently no lull in the noisy streets of New York city. The car-bells jingled lazily, the heavy stages

rumbled along over the rough streets, the tramp of numberless feet made a continual clatter on the sidewalks, and the signs of the Sabbath were mostly in the hearts of those who loved the day of rest. In the rude little room, high up in the dull brick building, the sombre sweetness of the morning twilight softened angular lines into curves of beauty, and kissed with its dusky lips the sleeping faces of the three young girls who were to spend the first Sabbath in the great city. All night they had slept calmly and sweetly, — for the clatter in the streets no longer disturbed them, — and their dreams were of home and its many comforts. They had retired to rest with unexpressed but homesick feelings at their hearts, and had comforted themselves with the thought of Beecher's on the morrow, and a whole day to forget all cares and feel justified, aye, sanctified in a rest from all their labors. They no longer laughed at the hard hair pillows, but slept as soundly upon them as they were wont to sleep on the downy ones at home.

Hannah had resolved, as she lay looking up into the fathomless patch of blue sky studded with the cool stars of October, that the morrow should find her in thorough search for some consolation in religion, for little Dill and for herself. Perhaps Beecher would say just what she needed, or inspire her to understand the hidden things.

Kate had gazed in silent meditation off to where the ocean lay, and her thoughts were a medley of past experiences and future hopes.

Mary turned her face to the wall, and tried to stifle back the tears that would creep under the eyelids and moisten her cheeks, as she thought of the blessed peace at home, and the beautiful Sabbath the morning would

bring, and gather together the familiar faces in the old church; but not one of them spoke, and slumber stole upon them at last, and the night was passed in refreshing sleep; and so the morning twilight found them calm and peaceful, and the coming light and active life renewed swept away the sad feelings of the evening, and made them happy and merry again. Breakfast was eaten, the room put in nice order, and the toilets nearly completed, when some quick, stiff-sounding steps approached their door, and a sudden, decisive knock warned them that some one sought admittance. Curious looks passed from one to the other; and Mary, who was least engaged, opened the door, and displayed to the astonished gaze of them all a very prim-looking woman, with sharp gray eyes and sallow cheeks. She was tall and spare, with a peculiar garb of dull brown, and carried in her hand a hymn-book and Bible. She made a very stiff bow, and said good-morning in a very stiff way. She looked around the room with quick, curious glances, and said "Pardon me," and "I beg pardon," several times before she made known her errand.

"Walk in," said Hannah after a little pause, not knowing what else to say. "We haven't much room, but here is a chair."

"Thank you, thank you," said she, entering the room, and taking the offered chair. "I felt it my duty, as a Christian woman, to call on you this morning, the holy Sabbath day, and look after your souls. I hear you are strangers here in the city, and no doubt you need advisers, and I thought maybe you would go to church with me. I am a boarder in this house. My name is Desire Brechandon, and I am an unworthy member of the —— Street Church."

"We are very much obliged to you," said Hannah, "for your interest in us, and your kind invitation; but we had decided to go to Brooklyn this morning, to hear Henry Ward Beecher."

"Like all the rest," said Miss Brechandon, throwing up her skinny hands in holy horror, — "like all the rest who come to the city and desecrate the holy Sabbath by going to the theatre!"

"Indeed, madam, you misunderstand us," said Kate. "We are not going to the theatre, but to Plymouth Church, to hear Henry Ward Beecher preach."

"Just like the rest!" repeated the woman, shaking her head and showing the whites of her eyes. "The Sabbath is the day for piety, but none can be found in the pulpit of Plymouth Church. You'll get no religion there, and I don't suppose you go there for the purpose of getting any."

"Why," spoke up Mary, with large eyes. "I thought Mr. Beecher was a common preacher, and had sermons like other ministers."

"An error many fall into," said Miss Brechandon. "The Sabbath is too holy a day, young ladies, to parade about the city, cross the river, and listen at last to Henry Ward Beecher. In the first place, I consider it breaking the Sabbath to go over in the ferry-boat, and — I hope you will understand that I talk for duty's sake. I have an interest in the souls of all humanity, and it is my aim to bring all I can into the fold of Christ."

"Breaking the Sabbath to cross the river?" said Hannah, in a tone of surprise. "Indeed, Miss Brechandon, I can see no religion in such strictness as that. I cannot but have a higher idea of Christianity."

"Please tell us," said Mary, "why you think it wrong to do so. I cannot understand it."

"You cannot understand it, because your hearts are not ready for it," said Miss Brechandon, with a sigh; "but such a conversation as this is sacrilegious on the Sabbath."

"Did you ever hear Beecher?" asked Kate.

"No, and I never intend to. His sermons are not religious, but secular; and laughter is a common thing among his congregation."

"You never heard Beecher?" said Mary; "and live in New York?"

"There are a great many people who live in New York, and even in Brooklyn, who never heard him. Country people get high notions about him, and rush to hear him when they come to the city, as they would go to a Jim Crow performance."

"But how can you judge him so harshly when you have never heard him?" asked Hannah.

"I don't judge any one harshly. I only state facts. I am not obliged to go to a circus, am I, to know it is not a fit place to go to?"

"Well, but this is quite a different thing," said Kate. "Won't you go over with us just this once, and hear for yourself?"

Miss Brechandon arose from her chair with a jerk.

"Well, I don't know what kind of people will come into this house next. In the room below they are Roman Catholics, mother and son, and I've tried all I can to convert them to the true religion; but they are as stubborn as mules, and there is the young man on the brink of the grave with those false ideas. I'm sure I've prayed over him, and besought him to come into the true church; but these Catholics are so set in their ways, there is no doing anything with them."

The girls were full of interest on hearing this bit of

news, and full of surprise that the pale young man, with his beautiful, melancholy eyes, was a Catholic; for there were associated in their minds with Catholics, cloistered walls, dreadful penances, false priests, and wicked father confessors.

"I cannot believe but that he is good, however," said Hannah. "His face is so spiritual."

"Good!" repeated Miss Brechandon; "if he had the true Christian religion, he would be a saint. He is as patient as Job and as harmless as a lamb."

"Poor boy! I thought so," said Kate. "Is he an American?"

"His father was a Frenchman of high blood; his mother, an American. He was born in France; but I never gossip on the Sabbath. I would like to have you go with me to church. Nothing will comfort us on our dying beds but religion."

"We are very much obliged to you for calling," said Hannah, "and we hope you will call again. We are not opposed to religion, but rather desire to possess it in truth and purity; but we go somewhat on the plan of investigation."

"Just the plan that has ruined thousands," said Miss Brechandon. "Beecher will do you no good, mark my words; he will drive you farther away from Christ, instead of bringing you nearer to him. He is a novelist and a joker."

There was silence a moment, then Miss Brechandon continued: —

"Sometime you will see that what I have told you is true. I have already said too much, and should have been engaged in holy meditation and prayer; but I see that you are lone young girls, in the midst of wickedness. Call on me if you will; my room is the first at the right, on the second floor."

"Thank you," said Hannah. "We shall no doubt be glad to do so, and you will always be welcome to our room."

"Thank you, thank you. Good morning; may you learn the true way that leads to life everlasting." With these words and a stiff bow, she was gone; and the girls turned, looked at each other, and then very irreverently burst out into subdued laughter.

"I suppose we shouldn't laugh," said Hannah, "but she is such an odd character. I am glad she called; I rather like her; she possesses genuine goodness, I am sure, though it is crusted over rather stiffly."

"What a name — Desire Brechandon," said Mary.

"We should start immediately, if we are going to Beecher's," said Kate, who for a wonder was first ready, and waiting at the door for a start. "I do wish people would leave us more to ourselves. If we begin to make acquaintances, what will become of our independence?"

They passed out into the hall and down the first flight of stairs, and there they met the pale young man and his mother coming home from mass; and his eyes seemed brighter, and his step a trifle stronger. He recognized Mary, smiled and bowed pleasantly, and received in return a flushed but happy look, while his mother made some pleasant remark.

"They don't look at all like Catholics, do they?" asked Mary in a whisper, as they passed on. The Catholics she had been accustomed to see were the low Irish, and this fair-faced young man, with the air of a gentleman and scholar, could not be associated in her mind with the brawny, brawling Irish she was accustomed to meet.

And now they were well on their way to the Plymouth Church, a place unrivaled in all the country in fame and popularity, and in the number of its weekly attendants. Troops of strangers in the city went there, as Miss Brechandon had said, with the same or almost the same purpose that they attended a place of amusement,—for pleasure and curiosity; but this fact, contrary to Miss Brechandon's ideas, was in no way a hindrance or detriment to religion, or a fault of the church or its pastor. Henry Ward Beecher, with his native tact, eloquence, and good nature, could no more help being popular than a rose could help being sweet. It is born in some men to be great, the same as it is born in some men to be small; and as there are many who cannot be lifted out of obscurity, so there are some who cannot be kept from notoriety; but popularity is not a synonym with perfection, and a person's own identity alone is the only thing, after all, that will keep his mind clear and vigorous, and bear him straight on in the path of life. A person *must* think for himself, and never accept a statement as truth because made by a great man or stated in an eloquent manner; for originality of thought alone will bring people towards an intellectual equality. Great and even good men sometimes fall into errors; and a person who talks much and often, not unfrequently makes mistakes, and sometimes grave ones. Desire Brechandon's words of disparagement concerning Beecher were a benefit to the sisters, though not in the way she had anticipated. Having been accustomed to hear only praise of this orator of the pulpit, they had set him up in their hearts as almost an object of perfection, and Hannah had long dreamed of his church as a place to find the true religion.

Originality of thought is never perfected until the mind has met with the spirit of opposition; and the belief of one person earnestly expressed has a greater influence than is generally understood. That is why earnestness is eloquence, because we are bound to respect the honest opinions of individuals; for if a person seems truly converted to a belief, we cannot help thinking he has some reason for his conversion, and are influenced accordingly. Miss Brechandon's words, then, from their opposition to the three girls' ideas and sentiments, had prepared them to be more independent judges of what they should see and hear in the famous church. The morning was cool and delightful, and of the nature to give activity to the highest and best part of the mind, and lift the soul nearer to its Creator. The noisy streets of the city, however, are not the places to awaken the purest and most divine aspirations; and this way of going to church was so different from the way the girls had always known, that they failed to catch the Sabbath's soothing influence, and busied themselves as they rode or walked in noticing the various objects that met their vision, and making comments. This was such a contrast from going to church in the country, where the sky and the meadows were silent, but full of sacred and sweet influence, and where the one bell in the quaint steeple awakened the green little valleys and rolling hills, and the pathway was strewn with flowers. The girls always had declared the journey to and from church by far the most beautiful and inspiring duty of the Sabbath, and the best sermons they listened to were those which Nature preached to them; but now, as they walked through Fulton Market, with its stands of sweetmeats and refreshments, and that far from in-

vigorating smell of vegetables and decayed fruit, they were not sufficiently heedless of things around them to pass on thinking only of the spiritual. However, when they walked up Hicks Street in the shadow of the numerous old trees that mingle their boughs together from sidewalk to sidewalk, something of those pleasant feelings came over them ; for the fallen leaves rustled under their feet, and the wind made a pleasant, familiar sighing in the spreading branches.

"This seems like Sunday," said Hannah, "and I am grateful for the seeming, for I was just thinking it would be terrible to lose those dear old Sunday feelings." They soon turned the corner on to Orange Street, and their hearts began to beat high ; for they knew they were near the church of which they had long heard, but never seen.

People were passing up the steps in front of a great brick building ; but it couldn't be Beecher's church, they thought, it was so entirely plain, and had no steeple at all. Only a great square red structure, blocked in on each side, with no prominent feature, nothing to tell of its popularity and world-wide renown. Still the crowd increased around it ; and, drawing near, the girls looked up over the great doors, and read, "Plymouth Church, 1848." They looked at each other in astonishment, and felt somewhat disappointed. Thicker and faster the people came ; and, fearing they should find no seats, they entered the hall, and saw that on each side of the church door there were crowds of people, and the gray-haired usher in his elegant black suit, and a tuft of rare blossoms attached to his coat, was saying over and over, making gestures with his hands, "Strangers, please step one side and wait till the pew-holders take their seats ;" and so the girls,

stepping aside, soon found themselves blocked in and squeezed by the fast increasing crowd. At last the great bell began to ring, and then the pew-holders came pouring in; and O, what a variety and elegance of costume they represented! These simple country girls had never witnessed any display of dress so rich and costly. Sweeping trains of richest silk, flashing bracelets, and diamond pins, satins and laces, and costly trimmings of every variety. Somehow this great display of attire didn't seem much like religion; and then the most of them passed on with such important and sweeping airs that the girls, even in their bewilderment, didn't quite admire, and thought how very plain and simple their own very best dresses were, and what heaps of money it must have taken to fit out so many in such elegant style. The usher now began to give the strangers seats; and the girls in a kind of dream followed him through the aisle, and fortunately received seats very near together. When fairly seated, they looked around them, and to their astonishment beheld no pulpit, but only a plain platform with a miniature desk, a quaint-looking chair, and a little stand, but O the beautiful flowers drooping over the high and elegant vases on each side of the desk! At these they gazed with lips apart. Such huge bouquets, and such a rich variety of colors! What wouldn't they give to go near them and touch them? In their enthusiasm over the flowers, they forgot to watch for the eloquent preacher; and before they were aware he had taken his seat behind the desk, and suddenly there came a peal from the mammoth organ that made them start from their seats and look up. None of them had ever seen before an organ so great and powerful as this; and as it gave forth strain after strain, under the

fingers of the organist, of wonderful, startling, and ravishing music, Hannah and Kate mutely pressed each other's hands and listened, awe-stricken and entranced. Mary, who sat in the pew behind them, involuntarily clasped her hands together, and overcome with unutterable emotions, the tears rolled down her cheeks, while the blood in her veins seemed to grow cold, and she shivered as if in an ague fit. The organist never played better or made a better selection, and a new world was open to Mary; her soul seemed to leap forth into delightful places, before unknown, into endless fields, and beauties untold, and discerned only when the spirit seemed to escape for a moment from its house of clay. The voices of the choir awakened her from the enchanted state of delirious joy into which she had fallen; but the enchantment lingered still as the grand oratorio, with its solos and duets, filled the great house with its power and melody. The prayer was offered in a low tone, and the sisters forgot, in their curiosity and excitement, to pay due reverence, and silently join in the petition. Hannah was busy examining the preacher's physique, and thinking how little of the spiritual there was in his looks, but how much there was of animal life and vitality. Kate was thinking of the boyish look about his mouth, the thin light hair put so smoothly behind his ears, and how much his pictures resembled him. Mary was busy in counting the pipes of the organ, the number of which she made out to be twenty-seven, and looking at the trumpets on each side, at the top, and the little brown angel perched in the middle, and wondering if ever she could touch the keys of a similar instrument.

The sermon did not bid fair, at first, to be anything but ordinary; but it grew more and more interesting

and absorbing as the speaker continued, and the great audience was soon almost breathless with interest. Its tone and import, and the impression it made upon the sisters, is better expressed in a letter from Hannah to Dill than I can express it; and as the letter is inserted in the next chapter, I will pass the discourse by for the present.

When the services were closed, and the people arose en masse to leave the church, the sisters remained quiet until the greater part had gone, and then, according to previous agreement, they passed on toward the platform. They went close to the flowers, touched them, and inhaled their fragrance; and then they waited for an opportunity to shake hands with Mr. Beecher. Hannah was determined. She had seen great men only at a distance; and though she would have much preferred an introduction, yet to speak with him at all seemed a great privilege; and so she lingered and lingered near, with Kate and Mary a little behind, feeling somewhat shy and backward. Several times Mr. Beecher glanced at them as if suspecting their object and desire; but there were so many filing along to speak with him, he had no time to make advances, but could only attend to those made upon himself. At last, however, Hannah saw an opportunity; and, stepping forward, she offered her hand, saying, "I wanted to speak with you very much, Mr. Beecher, and have been waiting some time for an opportunity to do so. These are my sisters."

How heartily the great preacher pressed those maidens' hands, and how pleasantly he spoke, inquiring after their health! They never forgot it, but the memory of it was a blessing to them always. No doubt great men have much to do, and much to try them,

but no one should voluntarily take upon himself too much to allow him sufficient time to be pleasant and kind, and attentive always to little "acts of kindness."

Great men, especially those known as philanthropists, should make it one of their chief aims in life to spare enough time always to treat individuals with gentleness as well as politeness. It is a duty; for many a heart has lost confidence in professors of philanthropy, through being repulsed or ignored by some one before worshipped almost as a god.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SUNDRY MATTERS.

THERE are so many things to tell about in the history of three young girls, with different aims and objects, that at times one knows hardly what thread of the narrative to take up, and therefore gets into some little confusion and doubt. If, therefore, this feeling makes itself at times apparent, the reader must consider the difficult position of the writer, and be governed accordingly.

The visit to Plymouth Church, with all its attractions, had a great influence on the sisters' minds, and gave them food for thought for many days. It also quickened their aspirations, and caused them to feel greater confidence in their final success. On Monday they commenced their duties with redoubled energy. Mary started off in high spirits to give her first lesson. Kate went, as usual, to Cooper's; and Hannah, after their steps had died away in the long hall, took a heap of manuscript from her trunk, and, piling it upon the table, sat down to inspect it. It consisted of several sketches, and one story of half a dozen chapters. They had been written at different times, and she had very little confidence in them, though she hoped they might realize to her a few dollars.

She had a list of a number of sensational papers, and the places of their publication; and it was there

where her hopes lay of disposing of the manuscript. Hannah had a more just idea of her powers than most young authors, and more modest hopes and desires for the future. Long in the past, it seemed to her, she had thought of fame and popularity, when she saw her simple verses in family papers, and built air-castles of the glorious time when she should be crowned with a laurel wreath, and applauded by the world; but with her growth of mind and experience, such vanity had passed away, and left her ambitious only for sufficient success to benefit the world, and secure to herself a comfortable income. She was not a genius, and she knew it; but she hoped that there accompanied her love for authorship sufficient talent to enable her to follow the profession she loved with profit to herself and others. She had already seen dark days, but her darkest were yet to come. Perseverance and labor alone would bring her success, and she was willing to give both; and she thought all this, as she looked over the manuscript that invigorating Monday morning.

"I hope these few stories will not prove detrimental to any one who may read them," she said to herself, "and I don't think they will, for I tried to have a good moral to them all." But her conscience was not at rest; she was working beneath the standard of her noblest ideas and her highest light. How much like trash those sketches were, — passion, revenge, suicide, and lunacy! She felt her face flush as she read them over; but then such *stuff* was in good demand. She was not brilliant enough to write for any high-toned journal, and receive any emolument, and she *must* live; and what harm was there in it, after all? In this way she tried to reason herself into the belief that it was well and justifiable; and though she succeeded

in partially stifling the voice of conscience, she did not overcome it; and there was on her face an expression not entirely frank and clear, as she took her manuscript in her hand and started out into the hall. Down to the lower part of the city she wended her way, and at last came to a sign on Fulton Street, which made her heart beat fast, for here she had decided to make her first call. With a mighty effort she ran up the steps, not daring to trust herself to walk, through fear she should be tempted to turn back; and climbing two flights of dirty, narrow, dingy stairs, guided by a notice, she rapped at a door, and a sallow-faced lad opened it.

The editor came, — a small, black-eyed, slovenly dressed man, — and told her he could not attend to her manuscript for two months at least, and seemed hurried and out of sorts; and Hannah gave a long sigh of relief when she found herself safely in the street again; but this repulse had made her bold, instead of timid, and caused her to say to herself with a little decided nod of her head, "I've a right to try my luck, and I will. I expect to be repulsed; but that won't discourage me."

At the next office, which was that of a popular sensational paper, she met with a kinder reception. "Leave your manuscript by all means," the proprietor said, "and we will read it within a few days, and, if it proves suitable to our columns, will be glad to buy it of you;" and so the manuscript was left; and receiving the promise that it would be looked over by the next Saturday, Hannah ran down the stairs, feeling as though she had left behind her a burden of many pounds' weight. She walked home briskly, and, seating herself at the table, wrote a letter to little Dill; and

in no better way can I give the state of her mind than by inserting it.

"My dear little Dill, — By this time I think you are looking for a letter from me; and that you may not be disappointed, I will write you one. We are now comfortably settled and doing nicely, and are fast becoming acquainted with the great city, which at first bewildered and deafened us. We get around quite easily, often alone, which latter fact you may keep to yourself. There is so much to be seen here, one hardly knows what to give attention to, except it is the pictures. We never feel in doubt concerning those, and stop to look at them wherever they appear. It is so very lively and busy here, you would think from appearances that it was an extra occasion. Everybody seems to be in a hurry, and the merchants bring their goods, even to stoves, out on the sidewalks for display. We have had one caller, and I wish you could have seen her. She reminded me some of Dan Pike's sister Jerusha, though she had a city air about her, which Jerusha hasn't got. She came to invite us to go to church with her, and introduced herself as Desire Brechandon. We laughed a good deal after she was gone, which I think wasn't quite proper and right, as she talked very solemnly to us. She is a very stiff church-woman, and would make an excellent deacon, if a man; and now I think of it, I don't see why she wouldn't do just as well as she is, for if a man, she couldn't be more solemn, stiff, or earnest. We were almost ready to start for Beecher's, and so of course were obliged to decline her invitation.

"I suppose I ought to say to you, before I tell how beautiful was Mr. Beecher's sermon, that there are

some church-people who think it wrong to go to hear him, and say he is not a real, genuine, pious minister of the gospel; but the question which I am now trying to solve is, whether religion is made for the good of man and the world, instituted by a wise Father, who loves us, or whether it is made simply for God's glory and praise. Perhaps I do not make the idea quite plain to you, as I am somewhat confused myself; but thus far I can see neither use, or beauty, or benefit, in such religion as Miss Brechandon preaches. Somehow it doesn't seem to amount to anything, and seems to draw people within themselves, and confine them to putting on long faces, going through certain dry ceremonies, and strictly obeying some old Mosaic law, to the neglect of the beautiful commandments of Christ, the sum and substance of which is love. Why it is that people make such prominent mistakes in their desire to obey the will of God, I cannot tell. Why they should make such selections among the commandments, and adhere to them so strongly, is a wonder to me. If there is anything harsh or fearful, they are sure to find it, and overlook the merciful, loving passages. The life of Christ was so liberal and grand. He did not confine himself to sect or country; and we as Christians are to be followers of Him. His crowning glory was love, good-will, and mercy; and to be his followers, our crowning glory, it seems to me, must be the same. I cannot see quite clearly yet on the question of church and creeds; but there is one thing that I begin to grow sure of, and that is this. If we feel a love for all our fellow-creatures, if we desire to benefit them in every way possible, are charitable, kind, and forgiving, the spirit of Christ is within us. It must be so; and you, my dear little friend,

have but to think over calmly your feelings in this respect, and if you love all your fellow-creatures with a desire to see them all happy, you love Christ. The sermon we heard yesterday was so grand and elevating, it went through and through me, and coincided so thoroughly with my nature, that I can give you only its spirit, and that was charity. It was not at all like Mr. Hayes's; and instead of drawing the hearers into a narrower circle, as it always seemed to me that his did, it cut away the bars of superstition, self-righteousness, and sectarianism, and left them in a great field where real practical work was to be performed, and self was left in an insignificant corner. I can see no better way, then, Dill, to gain for yourself a lasting peace, than to forget yourself and try to make others happy; for if there is anything which will blind us and make us wretched, it is selfishness. I feel that I have written enough this time; and hoping you may find some comfort in what I have written, I am

"Your loving friend,

"HANNAH."

Hannah was somewhat venturesome, and possessed curiosity in a greater degree than her sisters; and after she had finished the letter to Dill, she took the mysterious answer to Mary's advertisement, and read it several times over, with a very keen desire to know the author. In her imagination he was an old, white-haired man, with a kind fatherly face, to whom she would much like to offer her thanks, at least for his timely advice. The chirography was of such a character as to give no clew to the writer, whether man or woman, — a running hand not very distinct, and not at all even and elegant, but representative of the author's familiarity with the pen.

Hannah sat silent a long time over this letter; but her thoughts were busy in revolving in her mind whether she should throw it aside, and forget it, as her sisters would be sure to do, or whether she should answer it, and express her gratitude. Of course it was Mary's letter, but then it made no difference; she considered the advice as much a favor to herself as to her sister; and then, Mary never fancied writing, and she was always interested that way.

The result of her thoughts was the conclusion to write an answer; and she did so, — a very expressive and characteristic reply, in which she offered her thanks and best wishes, and daringly signed her own name, accompanied by the street and number of her residence. Had she waited an hour after this was done the letter never would have been sent; but on the impulse of the moment she dropped it, together with Dill's, into the letter-box; and the moment it slid down out of sight she repented, and would have given much to have it in her hand again.

She lingered around the lamp-post till she was ashamed, and finally went back to her room oppressed and frightened. What would the girls say? Why should she have been so silly? If only she hadn't signed her own name! What an oversight that was! This was the burden of her thoughts as she ascended to her room, and sat down dejected. "I hope this will teach me a lesson," she said, bringing her hand down hard upon the table. "Now I've made myself this trouble for nothing, and to think I should be writing to an unknown person so soon after coming to the city! Now I think of it, he may be some flirt or pickpocket who wrote the letter just to see what would come of it. If this won't teach me deliberation,

nothing will." She heard quick, tripping steps in the hall, and Mary came laughing into the room, but stopped suddenly on beholding Hannah's dubious countenance. "What *is* the matter?" she exclaimed. "What *has* happened?"

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Hannah, looking up as if surprised.

"Your face," said Mary, "is like a book, and I am skilled in reading it; and it tells me something has gone wrong to-day."

"I've only been so foolish as to write an answer to that mysterious letter," said Hannah, making a clean breast of it, "and I was just thinking perhaps I ought not to have done it."

"O, is that all? I'm glad you've done it; the good man ought to receive a reply," said Mary in a relieved tone. "And now," she continued, "do ask me something about my luck."

"Tell without being asked, won't you? I'm anxious enough to hear, and should have overwhelmed you with questions the first thing, if I hadn't been busily indulging in regret."

"Well, I had such a funny time trying to find the place! I went in the wrong direction, took the wrong car, and it seemed as though I never should find the place; and when I did — well, I was amazed. It was a tenement house, and I kept going up-stairs, and finally, away up in an attic, I found a piano, that must have been very fine in its day, and a little boy. O, dear, I just want to cry whenever I think of him. He was cruelly deformed, but his face was beautiful, only it had an old look, and was so very white; and he is my scholar. His mother was there sewing at the window, and hardly looked up once or spoke while I stayed.

The room was almost bare of furniture, — a mattress in the corner on the floor, no carpet, a small table, little stove, two old chairs, and the piano. I kept thinking all the time how brave and unselfish that mother was, and I wanted to speak to her in sympathy and praise; but her reserve forbade it. The boy, whose name is Neil Blossom, is eight years old, and is a genius. I looked on with astonishment as he touched with so much feeling and understanding the keys with his slender little fingers; but I am afraid he will never live to be a man, poor thing!"

"And this is the first one of your scholars that you have seen?"

"Yes, and what a beginning! I don't actually feel as though I could take one penny from that poor woman. I wish I could afford to give all such poor little geniuses lessons for nothing."

"Mary, this is a singular world, a very strange, uneven world. It is no trifle for a girl to earn just what she requires to eat and wear and be comfortable, without giving one thought further; but to earn one's living and education besides is a larger item than can be understood without experience: but we can do it, Mary, — you and Kate and I; and as to this poor little scholar of yours, teach him all you can, and see what time will bring about."

"That's consoling, and the only way to do; and now that I have my class engaged, I want to commence taking lessons, Hannah. How it hurts and humbles me to think I can't have some old master to teach me, but must drill away with some common teacher!"

"We can only hope for that in the future;" and as Hannah said this, she thought how hard she would work, and try to give, or help to give, both Kate and

Mary the advantages they longed for. She thought of her morning calls in Fulton Street, and wondered if her manuscript would be accepted; but she said nothing of this, and silently Mary arose and began to make preparations for going out again.

"Where *are* you going now?" asked Hannah.

"To the 'Conservatory of Music' on Broadway," answered Mary, her lip quivering slightly. "It is the only way I know. O Hannah, Hannah, I want to be an organist."

"And you shall be one; there is time enough. Learn all you can now, dear, and a way will be opened for you, I am sure."

So Mary passed down into the street, with the ten dollars her father had given her pinned snugly in the belt of her dress, for her lessons were to be paid for in advance. On her way back, having made satisfactory arrangements at the Conservatory, she fell to thinking in great earnestness of how she should find a piano to practice on. She had tried at several piano establishments for an opportunity to practice there, but without success; and their room was so small at home, there was no use in trying to get one in there. What should she do? for do something she must; but her troubled brain could devise no means, so she wound up her speculations on the subject, as was her custom, with the encouraging thought, "Perhaps the girls can invent some plan," and then she hurried home to find consolation and rest.

What a comfort and help these three sisters were to each other! Three busy minds were much better than one; and so unselfishly did each plan and work for the other that it would have been impossible to separate their interests. How to find a piano for Mary was now

the main point of consideration; and at night, when Kate had come from Cooper's, an earnest consultation was held, and many impracticable ways proposed and abandoned; but at last Kate, who had often been termed the inventor of the family, straightened herself from the leaning position she had been occupying, and exclaimed, —

"I have it, girls; and why I didn't think of it before is a wonder. You see that niche in the corner there, don't you, made by the chimney?"

"Yes."

"Well, you *haven't* seen an upright piano, but I have; and it's my opinion that niche is just large enough for one. I am always peering into all the music stores I come to; and Saturday, when going up the Bowery, I saw an upright piano, but thought it a very odd thing, nor had an idea we should ever want it; but I can see no other way now, but to get such a one."

"Why, what is it?" said Mary. "I don't want some horrid, old-fashioned thing. I never can endure to touch it."

"All you have got to do is to go and see it; and if you don't like it, we must contrive some other way."

And Mary did go to see it the next morning; and though she would have preferred one of greater magnitude, yet she found the tone tolerable, and the price five dollars per month; and after much whispering with Kate, and a reckoning over and over concerning the money, the piano was at last engaged and sent to their room. Trunks were piled together, to give space for it; and though there was hardly comfortable paths about the room, yet the girls declared the piano was a great improvement, and was sure to be a pleasure to

them, as well as profit. And so the arduous labor of the winter commenced, only to increase as the days went by. Mary drilled at the upright piano all her spare moments. Hannah commenced her writing, and Kate worked from morning till night at her easel. Hannah, in spite of her endeavors to forget the circumstance, looked anxiously for a reply to the letter she had so imprudently written, though she never mentioned it to her sisters; and when the letter was at last put into her hands, she trembled, and, going back to her room, locked the door, and, sitting down at the table, broke the seal and glanced the first thing at the signature. As she did this, she drew a long sigh of relief, for it was a woman's name, — Lisa Waterhouse, — and only a few words were written; but they were very significant.

"Miss Windsor, — I am delighted with your letter; would be happy to make your acquaintance. Call around at No. — Twelfth Street, some afternoon at four, and we will have a pleasant chat.

"Don't be afraid. I am only a lone little widow, and shall expect you. Truly yours,

"Lisa Waterhouse."

To say that Hannah was pleased with this letter would hardly express the true state of her feelings. Having chosen authorship as her profession, she was ever on the lookout for characters and incidents; besides, she was naturally fond of adventure and of making new discoveries, and delighted in solving mysteries. Her quiet home teaching, liberal, yet pure, and full of caution, always warned her against rashness and impulse; but this once, in answering this letter, she had

felt that she had not used caution; and when, after all her conjectures and fears, she found she had been writing only to a "little widow," and the harmless individual had invited her to call on her, she was at the same time relieved of the anxiety she had felt, and delighted with her good luck, as she called it. However, she resolved to go no farther with the acquaintance until she had discussed the matter freely with the girls; and so, when all three sat at the table eating their supper of bread and cheese, the pretty little note was produced and read and commented on.

"And so the dear old gray-headed man of our imagination has proved to be only a 'little widow,'" said Kate.

"Widows, I have heard, are artful," said Mary; "but then it is folly to be afraid of them. There is one thing plain to be understood. Hannah will not be satisfied until she calls on the mysterious lady, and so there is no kind of policy in opposing the affair."

"I want to act wisely in the matter, anyhow," said Hannah; "and if you girls think it would be better to pay no more attention to it, I will give it up; but then the lady has done us a 'good turn,' and might be a good friend to us. For my part, I see no harm in calling, as she invited me."

"I haven't the least objection," said Kate. "You might, by doing so, gain some new and valuable ideas. If a man, instead of a woman, I would say, 'Let him alone entirely, and as soon as possible;' for above all other things, let us avoid everything that has a tendency to bring the heart in danger of the darts of Cupid. That would be sure death to our plans. Don't you know how they have talked at home? How many times they have said, 'It's all nonsense and

time lost for those Windsor girls to study so much; they never'll make any use of their learning, but will be married in a year or two, and forget all their high-flown education.' It would be splendid to have gentlemen friends if only it wasn't dangerous; and pray don't let us run any risk."

"As for me," said Hannah, "my day is past; besides, I am neither pretty nor attractive, and therefore consider myself safe, and destined to use my education to earn my living for many years to come."

"For my part," said Mary, "I must confess that I think it nice and agreeable and pleasant to have a 'beau;' somebody to think you are prettier and better than anybody else, and give you rides and nice bows; and I'm afraid nothing but music, my glorious music, keeps me from being vain and silly, like so many girls who seem to live only to dress, and simper, and have beaux; for though I often long to have a great many pretty clothes and ornaments, yet I can willingly sacrifice them all for music."

"Brave little sister!" said Hannah, hastily brushing a tear from her eye; "there is something in your heart besides your love of music, that makes you so persevering and determined; and nothing could ever make you vain and silly."

"As for me," said Kate, drawing a long breath, as though she had been deep in thought, "I never expect to marry. I am not of the marrying kind; besides, I believe there is nothing that will so enchain and bind and satisfy a person like the study of Art. Marrying is one of the easiest and commonest things in the world; and there will be enough of it done undoubtedly, if I remain single."

"Which is to say that you don't feel it a duty en-

joined upon you to marry," said Hannah; "but this talk is all moonshine, Kate; when the right one comes, you'll not refuse him."

"But I am so bold as to class myself among those who never find the right one. However, this is not to the point exactly. Maybe we shall all marry; but we are not ready yet."

"And we don't want to give Cupid any encouragement to come near us, especially while we are lodged in this little room, with the hopes of past years to weave into realities. All of our time is required for the advancement of our objects; and I hope none of us will be silly enough to disturb our stay here with even the hint of a love affair."

"I think we are all agreed on that point," said Mary; "and I hope the little widow will in some way be a help to us. Call on her to-morrow, won't you, Hannah?"

"Perhaps that will be as good a time as any," said Hannah, much pleased with the way the conversation had terminated.

"I forgot to tell you," said Kate, as they all arose from the table, "that I saw Miss Brechandon to-night."

"O did you? where? what did she say?" asked Hannah, all in a breath.

"Yes, I did," said Kate, laughing, "down in the hall; and she said 'Good evening.'"

"Is that all?"

"No; she condescended to ask me how I liked Beecher, and gave me this tract. She belongs to the Lutheran Church."

"No wonder, then, she objects to Beecher," said Hannah.

"What do the Lutherans believe?" asked Mary. "I mean, how do they differ from Beecher?"

"Well, in a good many ways, I should think, though I don't know much about their creed. For one thing, they believe in the total depravity of man's nature."

"It's not strange, then, perhaps, that Miss Brechandon is so uncharitable toward Plymouth Church and the Catholics," said Kate. "She looked tired, and I thought she looked friendless; so I gave her a tiny little bouquet that I bought of a blind woman for you."

"I'm sure that was very kind and thoughtful of you, Kate, and shows that *your* nature at least isn't wholly depraved," said Hannah.

"You didn't ask her about the pale young man, did you?" asked Mary.

"No, I didn't ask her; but she told me, of her own accord, that he walked out alone to-day, and she seemed pleased with the fact. She appears to have a lively interest in him, in spite of his Catholic sentiments."

"Did you get any idea of what she does, or who she is?" asked Mary.

"No, but I had a glance into her room, and it actually looked cozy. There was a white kitten curled up on the rug, just where a sunbeam lay; and the carpet was bright and pretty."

"She has asked us to call on her, and why can't we, some time?" said Mary.

"We can as well as not. She invited us again to-night."

"What did she say to the flowers?" asked Hannah.

"She didn't say much, but I know she was pleased with them. She is *so* odd, and seems so afraid of dis-

playing an emotion, except on religion. I wish we knew something of her history, poor thing!"

"I don't think she would relish that epithet applied to herself, though," said Hannah.

"She is a poor thing enough, however, if she believes our natures are totally depraved," said Mary, who had been busy thinking for some moments on this belief.

The girls laughed, and Mary soon commenced an uproarious march on the piano, which threatened to drown entirely the rumble in the street. It was nearly dark now, and so they lighted their little lamp; and after singing, "Do they pray for me at home?" they gathered around the little table, and while Kate mended her gloves, and Mary darned her stockings, Hannah read from a well-worn volume of Tennyson, which they had brought from home, and the evening passed pleasantly.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE LONE LITTLE WIDOW.

THE house was one of the finest and pleasantest on Twelfth Street, and was shaded by an old sycamore tree. I mean the house where the "lone little widow" had rooms, and spent many listless, idle moments. Her parlor was a delightful little place of ease, elegance, and comfort; and here she lounged away many hours which might as well never have come to her, for all the good she derived from them.

Hannah trembled with excitement, when, at four o'clock the next day, she rung the bell, and stood waiting to be presented to the fashionable little widow. She had dressed herself with unusual care, and in her very best; but the house was grand, and she felt of her hair, and the bow at her throat, and glanced down at her plain gray poplin with some anxiety. The door opened.

Was Mrs. Waterhouse at home? she inquired of the servant; and would she tell her that Hannah Windsor had called?

In a few moments she found herself following the servant up a wide and elegant stairway; and every step she advanced, her heart beat faster, until it seemed to flutter in her bosom. Her cool and well-defined thoughts of an hour before had vanished; and her mind was in a state of confusion.

Mrs. Waterhouse was half reclining in an easy-chair by the window; and when Hannah entered the room, she arose, shook her hand cordially, saying, "This is my unknown correspondent; be seated, Miss Windsor; I am glad to meet you." She said this with the air of one who knew no such thing as embarrassment or confusion of ideas. Hannah, who had hardly spoken, sat down; and Mrs. Waterhouse, sitting opposite, scrutinized her from head to foot.

"I am very glad," stammered Hannah, "to be able to thank you in person for your kind advice to my sister."

The lady laughed merrily.

"You are welcome to the advice," she said; "but I am not the one to thank for it, after all."

Hannah's face grew red.

"Then you are not the lady who answered my sister's advertisement?" she asked.

"Well, no, not exactly. You are disappointed and shocked, Miss Windsor, I see it in your face; but it's no trick, I assure you; and you might not have received the advice, but for me."

Mrs. Waterhouse was intently looking at Hannah as she said this. She herself was disappointed; for she had expected to see a pale little face, and tender blue eyes with a beseeching look in them, and a scanty wardrobe that told of poverty; but instead, she beheld a very ordinary being, with nothing about her costume that spoke of interesting poverty, with features that spoke of character and decision rather than fascination and beauty.

"To whom, then, am I indebted?" asked Hannah with a touch of sarcasm in her tone. Mrs. Waterhouse laughed again.

"I'll tell you the whole story," she said; "I have got an uncle who is the oddest and most wonderful man in the world. He is as full of eccentricities as my pincushion is of pins. He is as dear a soul as ever lived, and as good as a saint, which is saying too much of a mortal, for saints belong in heaven only. Well, this uncle of mine is always inventing ways to benefit people, and makes himself a martyr to filthy and poverty-stricken objects in the streets. He comes in to see me often, and generally reads his morning paper at my window; and is always saying, 'Liza, can't you find something to do that will benefit yourself and somebody else?' but dear me, what could I do? He seldom fails to look over the advertising sheet of the 'Herald,' and sometimes answers an advertisement as in your case."

"If he, then, gave us the advice, why did you answer my letter?" asked Hannah, her eyes growing brighter, and her embarrassment vanishing away.

"I haven't quite finished my story," said Mrs. Waterhouse, laughing. "One morning he came in, sat down at the window, and began reading as usual. Suddenly he looked up as if struck with a new idea. 'Liza,' he said, 'here is an advertisement that I am impressed will never do any good; it is too commonplace. Some one must have written it who is wholly inexperienced, and needs some advice; but I want to do it in your name.' I asked him why. 'Because,' he said, 'I think that would be a better way. If the person happens to be a young lady, I will have nothing to do with assisting her.' I was willing, for I thought it might give me some amusement; so he wrote the letter with the understanding that if there was a reply, I should receive and answer it, or not, as

I liked. There *was* one; I liked it, and answered it; so here you are, and I am glad to see you, and would be glad to know how your sister is progressing."

Hannah, as she listened to this explanation made in the easy, pleasant way of the widow, gradually gained her composure; and when the story was finished, was ready to converse with as much ease as her hostess.

She gave a little account of her sister's experience in advertising, in a way so attractive that the little widow found herself greatly entertained, and the plain gray poplin that Hannah wore, she was soon convinced, fitted her admirably; and her disappointment concerning the tender blue eyes and pale face vanished.

"What an interesting circumstance!" said Mrs. Waterhouse, after Hannah had told her of her two sisters and their occupations. "How very strange! you write for papers, one sister is an artist, and one teaches music. This is as good as a story; and you all live together. Why don't you get married like other girls? I was married before I was twenty."

"And you are younger than I am now," said Hannah. "I can't tell why we don't get married, but I think our minds run in another direction."

"Dear me, it is so odd, I must tell uncle about it. He thinks women generally are such silly creatures, and care for nothing but marrying well; but I tell him they are just what they are made to be, and the men ought to be satisfied. But uncle, you see, is an exception; for I don't know a man in the world besides him who likes women to be anything but pretty creatures, dressed in good taste, and ready to entertain them with light talk, for they don't like depth in women; but then uncle, as I said, is an exception."

"It is a new idea to me," said Hannah, "that men

like shallowness in women, — true men I mean, who are not shallow themselves; but then you probably know more about it than I, for I have only a few gentlemen friends, and they are not fashionable ones."

"What a rarity you are!" said Mrs. Waterhouse, "and your sisters must be worth seeing. Do you really like to be so odd and so seclusive?"

"If you call it odd to earn our living, and to study for future usefulness, we like it; for we could never endure idleness without an aim in life."

"Why, all girls have an aim in life, of course; but yours is so different, — so much like men's aims. I always had an aim, which was to make myself as attractive as possible, and marry well; and it seems strange that women should have any other aim."

"Perhaps," said Hannah, "if you had possessed no beauty or attractions, you would have turned your attention in another direction."

"Where is the woman who thinks she possesses neither?" laughed Mrs. Waterhouse. "Dress, you know, has much to do with looks and appearance. Now, for instance, suppose you were dressed in an elegant black silk (black, I am sure, would be more becoming to you than anything else) with a long train, trimmed elaborately with black lace; and suppose your hair was frizzed and combed in a becoming manner; and suppose, besides, your chief aim was to make yourself attractive and agreeable: don't you think you could succeed to a considerable extent?"

Hannah thought a moment.

"I am sure I shouldn't know what to do," she said. "I neither dance, nor play, nor flirt."

"But you could very easily learn to do the first and last."

"But I am not rich, and poor people cannot afford such attractions; besides, if I possessed them to their fullest extent, they would do me no service, if I had no money."

"I suppose you are right, and that working women can marry working men, and be happy."

"And rich women, with all the advantages of life, must leave all the good things for the poor ones."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, if women of wealth only try to be attractive by dressing well, and dancing, and flirting, and the poor women gain the true knowledge and expand their minds, they get the cream, and their sisters the skimmed milk."

"Pooh! that's where we differ. They only get the roughest and hardest part of life; while we get the luxury, ease, and comfort, and the petting and loving too."

"Well, I had rather work than be idle, and would give more for a well-stored mind than a well-filled purse."

"You haven't tried the latter, perhaps."

"No, but I can see what it gives to people, and yet I prefer knowledge."

"One of the notions that goes with poverty."

"If you had said blessings, instead of notions, I would have heartily acquiesced."

The conversation was getting too deep for the little widow; but her interest in Hannah and her sisters was increasing.

"Three sisters with such different tastes are so interesting. How delighted my uncle would be with you! only he doesn't like the young ladies at all, and he might not speak a word to you; but I am sure,

when I tell him, he will be pleased, though incredulous; he will think you are either ugly or designing."

"Why?"

"Just because he is odd, I suppose; because he thinks all women vain and eager to marry."

"Has he got a wife?"

"Mercy! no, I hope not; he is a bachelor; but one would think he had lived a hundred years, to hear him talk."

"Don't tell him about us, please, Mrs. Waterhouse, if he will think so ill of us. We are only trying to learn something that we may be independent, and we do not boast of anything. Tell him, please, that we thank him for writing; but don't say anything farther concerning us."

"O, I couldn't promise that. I *must* tell him; he may have faith in you; and it's only fair that he should know something concerning you."

"Well, do just as you think best, Mrs. Waterhouse. We can only hope for his belief in us; but whether he thinks us ugly or designing, we shall only work on the same. I suppose it will not affect our energies or ambition."

"Of course not; uncle is a saint, but so full of eccentricities and strange notions."

The conversation was kept up for more than an hour, and Hannah at last arose to go.

"I am glad to have made your acquaintance," said Mrs. Waterhouse, "and I am anxious that you and your sisters should call on me. Promise that when I send you an invitation, you will come."

"I can only promise that we will if convenient."

"That will do, then; call at four, Miss Windsor, whenever you will; I shall always be glad to see you.

I get so tired of everything sometimes, that something rare does me good."

"I would invite you to return my call," said Hannah, blushing, "if we were situated to receive callers. You would hardly care to come to our little room, I am sure."

"Then you shall return your own calls, and I will be satisfied."

Kate and Mary were both at home when Hannah returned, eager to hear of her interview with the little widow.

"How *did* she look?" asked Mary; "did you like her?"

"She is a perfect little beauty, I think," answered Hannah; "but I don't know whether I liked her or not."

"That is unsatisfactory," said Kate. "What kind of a house does she live in?"

"Elegant, just on the corner, with a great sycamore tree in front, and her parlor is so inviting."

"What did she say to you?" asked Mary.

"Well, girls, to tell the plain truth, she isn't at all what I supposed, and I was greatly disappointed. She didn't even write the answer to the advertisement."

"Didn't? who did, then?" exclaimed both in a breath.

"Her uncle, a strange man, who has an antipathy toward young ladies, and believes all women are silly and eager to get married."

"Ignoramus!" said Kate, indignantly; "if he is so silly as that, why did he answer Mary's advertisement?"

"O, well, the little widow says he is a saint on

earth, and helps the poor, but has no faith in women as regards mind and intelligence."

"Which belief is no credit to his understanding," said Kate.

"So I thought, and had half a mind to tell her so; but she thinks women were made to be frivolous, or pretty creatures, as she said, and thought I was such a rarity."

The girls laughed.

"Did you present her with any of your rare thoughts?" asked Kate.

"I suppose she thought your dress exceedingly plain," said Mary.

"O yes, I suppose so. She looked at it sharply; but she is a bewitching little thing, not quite as old as I am, and looks so well in black."

"But tell us, do, before you go any farther, why the man wrote the answer to the advertisement, and the little widow answered the letter you wrote," said Kate.

"O that was a plan between them. The whole was done in Mrs. Waterhouse's name, because her uncle wanted nothing to do with young ladies. If I had known the whole circumstance, and understood the little widow as I do now, I hardly think I would have called."

"Why not?" asked Mary.

"Well, you see she is merely a fashionable woman, and her acquaintance, I am inclined to think, will do us no good."

"It may, though; I would like to see her," said Mary.

"So she would like to see you and Kate, and is to send an invitation for all of us to come and see her some time."

"That is good news, and I want to go; don't you, Kate?"

"Yes, I do. I think we needn't be afraid of a silly, fashionable woman's harming us. She will make us all the stronger of course, when her folly is so apparent."

"Do you know, girls, I half hoped she was a literary woman? but only think how far she is from it. Every one seems to think it so strange that we should all choose occupations so different, and I don't know but it is rather rare; but how nice it is! Letters, painting, and music. Our choice shows that we at least had decided tastes, and that is in our favor in regard to success. I shall be glad when my manuscript is read, and I know its fate. How it worries me!"

"They will undoubtedly pay you something for it," said Kate. "What have you written to-day?"

"A story,—a wild, startling romance; how I despise such things!"

A decided rap on the door just then hushed their conversation.

Miss Brechandon entered.

"Good evening," she said, glancing quickly at the upright piano in the niche. "I thought I heard music in this room; I was sure of it; but I couldn't imagine what it came from. Who plays?"

"I do," said Mary promptly.

"Not for amusement, I'm thinking?"

"O, no, ma'am; I am a music teacher."

"Oho, indeed, are you? Just what I suspected. I most generally get anything right, and that is what I told them. Poor David is so crazy over music; and he was so anxious to know if there was a piano in this room."

"And who is poor David?" asked Hannah.

"Why, the young man who has a room just under here; the Roman Catholic who has lost his health."

"There, I knew he must love the beautiful," said Mary eagerly. "Does he play himself?"

"Play himself! well, yes, I rather think that he does: not the piano, though, but the organ, in one of the great Roman Catholic churches."

"O does he indeed?" exclaimed Mary delightedly.

"Yes, he does," answered Miss Brechandon sharply, "and what is that to go into ecstasies over? I'm sure it's more a thing to make one weep; and I've told him so enough."

"His playing in a Catholic church isn't what pleases me, but to learn that he is an organist surprised me so. I hadn't thought of such a thing," said Mary.

"He doesn't play, now he is so feeble, of course?" said Hannah.

"Yes, he does; and I tell him I do believe he would play if he was dying; and he said, if you will believe it, that he was sure nothing would give him greater pleasure if he was strong enough. O, it's a terrible thing that he can't see the true way, — that he can't be born into the true church."

"Miss Brechandon, what is the true church?" asked Kate.

"It isn't the Roman Catholic," said Miss Brechandon sharply.

"But the Catholics think so," said Hannah.

"Yes, and the Mormons think theirs is, but we know it isn't."

"Well, but what is?"

"An idle question, miss. Do you suppose I

would belong to a church I didn't believe the true one?"

"Then the true church, you think, is the Lutheran, of course," said Hannah.

"Well, of course I do; and the reason you don't is because you know nothing about it. But I am in a hurry; I have an errand out, but will come back in a few moments if you have no objections; and if *you*," pointing at Mary, "will play a tune for me, I will be greatly obliged."

"Certainly, I will be glad to do so," said Mary; and Miss Brechandon walked out, but soon returned. She seemed somewhat anxious and disturbed, yet in good spirits. "Now play your very best," she said; "I am a pretty good judge of music: please play what you consider your best piece." Mary was silent a moment, but finally commenced an elaborate piece, full of variations and melody. And she played as if really inspired, while Miss Brechandon looked on, astonished and charmed. She finished, and, rising from the stool suddenly, ran to the door, saying, "How warm! I must open this door;" and in spite of Miss Brechandon's terrified scream, "O, don't, don't, it's plenty cool, play on, do," she threw the door open, and then started back; for she stood face to face with the pale young man she had met already several times. There was confusion for a moment. Miss Brechandon wrung her hands, not from anguish, but from nervous excitement; and the young man took several steps backward, and tried to stammer out an excuse. Finally Miss Brechandon regained her composure sufficiently to make an explanation.

"It is all my fault," she said. "Don't blame the young man; he doubted the propriety of coming up,

but I assured him there was no harm in it; and he is so bewitched to hear music; and I knew Miss Mary was a good player by the looks of her eyes and her fingers; and so I begged him to come up and listen while she played; and he did so; and what is the harm?"

"If the door hadn't been opened so suddenly, no one would have been the wiser," said the young man; "but I beg your pardon for playing eavesdropper, and will promise to listen no more without your permission; but I cannot be sorry I came up and heard the music, for I can assure you it was worth hearing." He bowed to Mary, and smiled.

"Thank you," said Mary, pleasantly. "I am glad you listened, if it gave you any pleasure."

"I might as well introduce you now," said Miss Brechandon, "and undoubtedly you will be good friends. Young ladies, this is Mr. David De Witt; Mr. De Witt, these are the Misses Windsor;" and the young man bowed politely in the dusky hall; and the girls bowed, standing in the door; and this was their introduction. He only said "Good night" after this, and went away.

"I never set my eyes on that boy," said Miss Brechandon, after he had gone, "without sighing for his soul. To think he should confess his sins to a priest! It is enough to distract one, I say."

"Miss Brechandon," said Hannah, "how shall I know what the true church is? There are so many, it would take me a life-time to study the creeds of them all. Mr. Beecher says one thing, you another, and Mr. De Witt another. All of you are good people; and which of you shall I believe?"

Miss Brechandon was silent a moment, as if con-

sidering what to advise; then she said, "Is your soul in a state of inquiry? If so, I will send you in a little book which I think will help you to become converted."

"I have no objection to books, Miss Brechandon; but somehow I have no idea that such a book as you name will do me any good. I do not feel rebellious; I am not suffering from any fears; for whatever else comes, I cling in faith to the kind Father who created us. The time of doubts and fears has passed away with me, concerning the will of God; and I only think now of churches and creeds, and would like to know something of theology, that I may be prepared to help those who are troubled about these matters."

Miss Brechandon stared at the speaker as if stricken with wonder.

"What?" she said, "a girl like you talking of the study of theology! that is a thing that doesn't concern us, but ministers of the gospel. Come out from the world, and confess Christ, joining yourself with the church of God; that is the only way you can be saved."

"What is confessing Christ, Miss Brechandon?" asked Kate, who had been listening attentively.

"Can it be possible that you are so ignorant as not to know? A pitiable state you are in, indeed," said Miss Brechandon.

"It seems to me," said Hannah, "that the only true way to confess that we love and work for Christ, to show to the world that we are Christians, is to follow his example; for we cannot be his followers without imitating his good works and meek and gentle spirit."

"The infidel boasts of his good works, Miss Windsor; but where is he?"

"But the infidel possesses not the spirit of Christ; he is self-sufficient; he boasts of his own strength, and a person of that kind cannot be a follower of Jesus Christ."

"You are a strange girl," said Miss Brechandon. "Have you instituted a religion of your own?"

"O no, no; I believe in no religion but the religion of Christ; and the greatest thing I am at a loss about is, whether it is a duty to be a church-member, and if so, what church should I unite with?"

Miss Brechandon seemed ill at ease, and looked at Hannah as though she had found a wonder.

"You must be somehow wrong," she said, "and I advise you to pray earnestly and constantly to understand what is right."

"So I do, my dear Miss Brechandon; for earnest and pure desire is prayer always, I am inclined to think, and I am sure I am always anxious to learn the truth."

"The heart is so prone to evil," said Miss Brechandon, "and unless ye be born again, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

"After all," said Hannah, "there is no way but to hope, and learn, and wait; and while I do so, I will not be afraid, for though —

> 'I know not where his islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air;
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond his love and care.'"

Miss Brechandon looked anxious and uneasy. Hannah's words influenced her strangely, and made her feel, though vaguely, somewhat ashamed of her stiff doctrine, for which she had found herself so incapable of giving a reason. Hannah and her sisters seemed so

charitable to all, and so kind and loving to each other, and then there was so much faith there, that in spite of herself Miss Brechandon was drawn toward them, and fascinated by their fresh manners and pure hearts.

"Good night," she said abruptly, and was gone.

"How wise Hannah is!" said Mary.

"How weak I am!" said Hannah.

"But, girlies, we are all strong in love," said Kate; and they embraced each other tenderly.

## CHAPTER X.

### DARK CLOUDS.

"O HANNAH! is that true?"

"Yes, dearies, it is true, and I am for once discouraged;" and brave-hearted Hannah sank into a chair, and, dropping her face in her hands, burst into tears.

"How could it be so?" asked Mary, kneeling at Hannah's side. "You felt so sure it would be accepted, and so did we all. I hardly thought of such a disappointment."

"What objections did they have to it?" asked Kate, leaning on the back of Hannah's chair.

"I hardly know. I can't think. I was so surprised when he gave me back the manuscript. I suppose I haven't enough ability to write a good story. I can find no other excuse," returned Hannah, raising her head, and wiping her tearful eyes. "I thought as I came home through the street that the better way for me was to stop this foolish scribbling, and go to work by the week, and earn a decent living, and be content, like a thousand other girls."

The sisters had now been in the city more than a month, and the money they had taken from home was wholly exhausted. Kate had become so absorbed in her work that so long as a penny lasted, she would sit at her easel from morning till night; and though her improvement was rapid, and praise from her teacher

frequent, yet her means were passing away; and often as she lay on her little bed, she tossed her arms, and thought far into the night, trying to devise some means to earn a few more dollars.

Mary had continued to give lessons to her four scholars while she took her own at the Conservatory, and practiced all her spare moments on the upright piano.

The little boy, Neil Blossom, had gained both her pity and affection; and to no place did she go with more cheerfulness or pleasure than into that little bare room, so suggestive of poverty, where the pale mother sat always at the window, sewing steadily, as though her life depended on her industry; and so it did.

Poor woman! like how many other mothers she was giving away her strength and life for the benefit of her child! but the brightening of her pale face, and the smile that came to her thin lips, as the boy played, as only the inspired can, showed that she was well repaid for all her labor; and so Mary found it both a joy and benefit to teach the crippled boy, where she had expected only anxiety and pity. Hannah had been wholly unsuccessful in trying to dispose of her manuscript. The sketches, and story of several chapters, which she had left with a publisher on Fulton Street, had not been accepted. With what strange emotions, that Saturday afternoon, she had climbed the dirty stairs! and how her heart had fluttered, as she inquired, with an effort, if the manuscript was read!

Yes, it was read, the man told her; but they had concluded not to purchase, as it was hardly adapted to their columns. Too much description and moralizing, and too little plot. It was well written, he said, and it was probable that with some effort she might do well; he had noticed the disappointment that crept into her face.

Perhaps, he said, she could succeed in writing a serial; they were in want of one. It must contain eighteen or twenty chapters of ordinary length, and be of such a character as to absorb the reader, and make him always anxious for the next number. They bought very few sketches, except from their regular contributors, unless they were uncommonly interesting.

Hannah caught at the idea of writing a serial. She *would* suit, she thought, she *must* succeed when so determined; and so she told him she wished to try, and asked how soon he wished to use it. In a fortnight, he said, and gave her a few hints concerning the style. Hannah had gone home with the rejected manuscript in her hand, but a hope in her heart that in two weeks she might receive thirty dollars, — the price offered for the serial, if it suited. Kate should have her paints then, she thought, and not be obliged to go to work for a living, but could continue to work at her easel. The girls had listened eagerly to her plans, and had entire faith in her success. How nice it would be! they said; and undoubtedly she could write more after that was finished, and at that price would soon make her fortune. Thirty dollars in two weeks! More than they had dreamed of; and with this money they could all get well started, and very soon they could earn enough to pay her; for they should pay her every cent. She would suit the publisher any way, Hannah said, she was determined; and she had already thought of an excellent plot, and she could find plenty of incident by going into the streets. As for those sketches, she said, it was not at all strange that he refused them, for they were rather tame, now she thought of it; though before, she had thought them

startling in the extreme. Kate, she said, must continue to work at Cooper's, and learn as fast as she could, and she should be sure to get the thirty dollars and more to do after it; so there was nothing to fear. Long they had talked that night, and planned, lying in their little white beds; and had at last fallen asleep with their hearts full of hope and ambition. The next morning, Hannah had arisen an hour earlier than usual; and while Kate and Mary were fast asleep, she commenced the first chapter of the forthcoming story, and by the time her sisters had awakened, had nearly finished it. Her face was flushed, and her pen flew along rapidly, but not rapidly enough to keep pace with the thoughts that were flooding her brain.

"Why, Hannah!" Kate had said, rubbing her eyes; and Mary had repeated the words, springing from her pillow, and throwing from her face the wealth of brown hair. O what a day of hope that was! and how Hannah wrote and wrote, only growing weary at night, and then going out into the streets to freshen her thoughts and invigorate her mind! How the girls gathered around the little table every night to listen to what had been written during the day, and how they laughed and cried over it, and declared it intensely interesting, certain it would be accepted; how could it be otherwise?

And so the two weeks had passed away; and the story was finished. During the time even the little widow had been forgotten and neglected; and the invitation she had promised them, had not been received from her; but even if it had, it would have been refused, for no visiting was on that two weeks' programme.

Miss Brechandon, too, had received very little of

Hannah's attention, though her sisters had been twice to her room, where they met the pale young man, and found him, they said, such a gentleman, and so pleasant and agréeable, and Miss Brechandon so odd, but so very kind in her own way.

And when the story was really finished, and the manuscript lay in a heap, so neat and plain, on the table, what a time of rejoicing it was! Hannah's flushed cheeks were kissed a half-dozen times by her enthusiastic sisters; and when she wrapped it snugly in a paper, and took it under her shawl, she could really hear her heart beat; and the girls somehow felt a sensation they had never felt before; and Kate, almost before she was aware, exclaimed, "O Hannah, what if it should be rejected!" and Mary had replied, "But it won't be, for it is *so* beautiful;" and Hannah had gone on her way to Fulton Street; and her success is explained in the conversation with which this chapter opens. The very next day they had read it, and rejected it.

"Yes," continued Hannah, "I half concluded, while coming home, that I would give up writing; for it is evident I have no ability or tact; for only think how steadily and hard I have worked for two weeks, and all to no purpose. I'd better have been at work in a factory."

"O dear, it is such a disappointment," said Kate; "but do tell us why it was rejected."

"The same old story, — not startling enough; and I'm sure I couldn't make anything any more so; but they had just received one they liked better."

"There, that's why they rejected yours, I know; and the rejection don't prove that you have no ability."

"And I have got a bit of good news, after all," said Kate.

"Good news! What is it? though I'm sure nothing can raise my spirits now."

"Well, I have got some work to do. Look here!" and Kate displayed heaps of black silk cord in a paper bag. "I am to make these into cloak trimmings like this sample. It is quite easy; and I shall have eighteen cents per dozen."

"Where did you get it?"

"Miss Brechandon told me of the place, though she didn't know I wanted work. She was telling Mary and me a story of a poor work-girl who had formerly made these trimmings, but was now sick. I inquired the number and street where the work was to be obtained, and I do not think she had an idea I wanted work; and then I went there almost immediately, and got all this cord; so there is no danger of starving."

"Is there enough for me?" asked Hannah.

"O yes; but you'll not give up writing."

"I must, for the present at least, because I cannot sell my manuscript; and I can't work for nothing. I have only a dollar in my pocket, and that will last only a short time."

"What will you do with your story?" asked Mary. "Won't somebody buy it?"

"It will be some time before I can get courage to offer it to any one else; and I am so ashamed of myself, too, for allowing the publisher to see my great disappointment. I hardly stayed a moment, fearing I should burst into tears. I might have known it was at least doubtful about its being accepted; but I felt so very sure. I shall never again have confidence in anything I write."

"Can it be possible that Mary and I are no judges at all? We were so deeply interested."

"Probably because of your interest in me. If you had read it without any knowledge of the author, you would have thought it probably a failure."

"No, no, we shouldn't, I am sure," said Mary. "It would have interested me wherever I had read it. Little Jim, only think what a comical character he was! and that old darkey, and the poor, little sick girl. I'm sure the man had no taste or judgment who refused it."

"It is probable that ours are inferior to his; for he has had more experience, and is less prejudiced, than we," said Hannah.

"Well, allowing all this," spoke up Kate, with flashing eyes, "I am sure of one thing, and that is this. Your story is infinitely better than many I have read; and it must be there is somebody in the city who would buy it."

"But if my courage rises on no higher key than it is now, I can never offer it to another publisher; and I shall work on this trimming. I am so glad you got it, Kate. It is well we made the acquaintance of Miss Brechandon. She has such a good heart, and her religion is only false teaching; her heart is full of charity. Only think how kind she is to Mr. De Witt."

"She is greatly attached to him," said Mary. "You see, when he was very sick a few weeks ago, she stayed with him a great deal, for his mother is an old woman and feeble; and in this way she became acquainted and attached to him, in spite of his being a Catholic."

"Well, I must go to work immediately," said Han-

nah, rising and throwing aside her hat and shawl. "I have no time to waste; please give me a little information about this work, Kate. Perhaps I can make a dozen to-night."

"O no, you can't possibly," said Kate, "because it is new work; but you can learn; and I am going to work too immediately;" and so they gathered around the table, the inseparable three, and all sewed in the dim lamp-light.

"Now," said Kate, while they sewed, "let us forget all about the manuscript to-night, and I will tell you a plan of mine. You see I have been thinking if I could only get five dollars, I would buy me some water-colors, and learn to color photographs. They say it is excellent business; and there is a girl at the Institute who says she will show me how to mix the paints; and I'm sure I could learn the rest myself, if I had a sample."

"Who would you color them for?" asked Mary.

"Why, just go around to the galleries, and get work; and I have been thinking besides, girls, that I must have some oil paints and brushes, and they will cost me twelve dollars sure. How hard it is to do anything!"

"Everything would have been right, if I had only written a good story. O girls, why did I fail when so confident and determined?"

"It is probably all for the best," said Kate; "we can't expect to sail in clear waters always; and if I could only get my paints now, I am sure I could do something."

"Well, let us work for them," said Hannah.

"I will work too," said Mary, "and we can soon earn five dollars."

So the girls worked as fast as their fingers would fly; but the cord was stiff, and they did not accomplish so much as they had anticipated. Yet they tried to be cheerful and hopeful, and the days went by. But there was the rent to pay, and then washerwoman and the baker; and they began to despair of ever getting the five dollars together; but a bit of good luck was in store for them.

One morning Kate started, as usual, for Cooper's, and left Hannah busily sewing, and Mary at the piano. She had not been gone long before her step was heard in the hall, which was a sure sign that she had brought a letter.

"From mother, girls! from mother!" said she, bursting into the room, and flourishing a yellow envelope; and then tearing it open, lo and behold, a greenback, soiled but genuine, fluttered out and fell directly on Hannah's lap.

"Five dollars!" exclaimed Hannah, picking it up. "Five dollars! just what you need, Kate; read the letter now, don't wait;" and Kate read the letter; and as usual, all brushed tears from their eyes, which left them bright as stars.

"We send you five dollars," the letter said; "you will undoubtedly need it; and we will try to send you some more soon."

"Will it be right," said Kate, "to take it for myself?"

"Right?" exclaimed Hannah and Mary in a breath. "Of course; we don't need it."

"But, girls, I have changed my mind about the water-colors. It is time I commenced to paint in oil; and shall I take this money to start with?"

"Yes, yes, by all means," said Hannah.

And soon Kate commenced painting in oil; and this was her forte. A new world opened to her; and the inexpressible joy of the artist began to swell in her bosom. Her teacher looked on surprised, and told her he never saw one who had a better eye for color; but the lack of means held her back, and she could only paint a few hours in a day. How reluctantly she would leave her easel and pallet! and how she became more and more absorbed in her work, until poverty was forgotten, although it stared at her persistently, while often one dry cracker served for her supper! Hannah sat at the little table and sewed from morning till night; for she dared not spend her time to write again with no promise of success. A few dollars came to her now and then from a publisher who at times published a sketch for her; but it was only as a drop in the bucket. Ah! these were trying days; but the three sisters determined to succeed, comforted each other, and worked on. Early and late they worked, their interests all in common, helping and cheering and blessing each other. Their letters to their friends at home betrayed not the trials they were obliged to endure; and none knew but themselves how hard they labored, and how indomitably they persevered. As a natural and unavoidable consequence, their wardrobes began to grow shabby; their boots, from so much tramping in the streets, lost their pretty, stiff, and genteel look, which was most mortifying to their sense of taste and elegance. Their gloves became soiled and worn; and often they lay down upon their little beds, and looked off at the stars hungry and disheartened. A few dollars came from home sometimes, but there was always a use for such receipts in another direction than food or clothes. Their improvement

could not be rapid, they had so little time for practice. As for Hannah, she continued to sew as if for dear life, and was only happy in assisting her sisters. Kate at last obtained the water-colors she so much longed for, and made a trial of coloring photographs. She had received some instruction from a friend; and with high hopes after a little practice, and the praise of her enthusiastic sisters, she went out to look for work in the picture galleries. Along the Bowery she took her way; and owing to her lack of confidence in herself, she selected the most insignificant gallery she could find, and, entering, made known her errand. O yes, the artist said, he had work enough, and would be glad to engage her; but then of course he must see some of her work. So he gave her several pictures to color as specimens. Flushed and happy, she almost ran down the stairs and through the streets, until she arrived home.

Hannah stopped her sewing, and Mary her playing, when Kate came into the room, and exclaimed, —

"I'm going to work immediately; for I can get plenty of work if only I can color these photographs to please the artist;" and before the girls had time to answer, she had taken her place by the window, with her paints before her, and there she worked and worked, her courage failing, instead of increasing, with every touch of her brush; but she was determined to do her best, however poorly that might be; and she told none of her misgivings to her sisters, who waited anxiously for the pictures to be finished.

When they were done, the girls scrutinized them with some misgivings.

"The fact is," said Hannah, after she had gazed in silence a long time, "you can't expect to paint as well

as those who have received instructions, and had much practice."

Kate laughed constrainedly.

"Which is as much as to say the coloring isn't good."

"Why, no, maybe they will like them, Kate; I am no judge; but it does seem that they are rather highly colored."

"I don't believe they are," said Mary. "Anyhow, don't be afraid to take them home."

So Kate wrapped them up carefully, and with faltering steps sought the gallery where she had received them. The artist received her kindly; but when he saw the photographs, which were really colored wretchedly, he told the anxious young girl politely that she might do very well undoubtedly with practice, but those were hardly up to the mark, at least not just what he wished; and, blushing deeply, Kate went away; and her face was still rosy red when she entered the room again, where Hannah and Mary were anxiously awaiting her return. The affair seemed just at that moment to strike them as ludicrous; and so they all burst out into laughter, and Kate said, —

"We might as well laugh as cry. I wasn't very much disappointed that he refused to give me any more work. I was in reality sure they were not done good; but I must confess I felt ashamed to have him look at the pictures, and my face felt like fire."

"So that plan has played out?" said Mary, still laughing.

"No, indeed," said Kate. "I'll show you yet that I can color a photograph that none of us need be ashamed of."

"We might have known," said Hannah, "that you

could do nothing with no instruction and no practice. I do believe we are a parcel of ninnies."

"I believe so too, and I'll just go to work again on that trimming, and wait till I learn a little more, before I beg any more photographs to color."

"There is Miss Brechandon's step," said Hannah. "I wonder what errand she has now."

"A letter for Miss Windsor," said Miss Brechandon, standing in the door-way, "and a note for Miss Mary," flinging two letters on the table, and vanishing as suddenly as she had entered.

"From the little widow," said Hannah, opening hers.

"And mine, — why, girls!" and Mary stopped, and looked confused.

"What is it? no bad news, I hope," said Kate.

"Why, it is really from David De Witt; and what can he want, and how beautifully he writes! O girls! I see what it is, — an invitation to St. Stephen's Church to-morrow, to hear the organ. Girls, girls, shall I go with him? I never went to a Catholic church in my life; and St. Stephen's is such a grand one, they say."

The letter was passed from one to the other, and read silently.

"O no, there's no use, after all; I've nothing decent to wear," said Mary after a moment; "and what excuse can I give?"

"Would you really stay at home for that reason?" asked Hannah earnestly.

"Why, wouldn't you? only think of my boots and gloves."

"That reminds me of my new discovery," said Kate. "This morning, while you two were out, I looked down at my boots, and was actually discouraged,

they were rubbed so, and looked so shabby; so I caught the first thing of a liquid nature near me, which happened to be my bottle of mucilage, and rubbed some on the toe of one of my boots, and you would have been surprised at the improvement it made. So, Mary, there's a remedy for your boots."

"The fact is," said Hannah, "we might go alone to St. Stephen's, just as well, and then no one would recognize us, or perhaps think of our dress; but to go with Mr. De Witt is quite another thing. I am almost sorry, girls, that we have made any acquaintances; but then we ought to be glad to find friends at all times, and Mr. De Witt doesn't dress so elegantly as some."

"But wouldn't it look strange to go off with a Roman Catholic? What would the people at home say?"

"They will never know it. What would they say if they knew how we sew on that trimming, and live in this little room and on a crust of bread, — we who were thought almost haughty at home? I would like to go with Mr. De Witt, he is so appreciative of music; and then I like him somehow; he is very agreeable."

"So I think, and what is the harm?" said Kate. "You and I, Hannah, can go to Dr. Chapin's, as we intended; and there will be something new to talk about, if Mary goes to St. Stephen's."

"Well, I'm sure there's no harm in it; so let us see what the little widow writes this time. Another invitation, as sure as the world! What are we coming to, girls? we, poor creatures, who can hardly get enough to eat, invited to a ball!"

"A ball!" shrieked Kate. "A ball! Hannah, are we crazy, or is the little widow losing her reason?"

"A real ball!" exclaimed Mary. "We invited to a real ball? No, you are joking. How we would look at a ball? Gray poplins, nearly worn threadbare, boots plastered over with mucilage, and soiled gloves;" and all laughed merrily.

"And these invitations have come in our most poverty-stricken time. Suppose the little widow, with all her comforts, could have a faint realization of our circumstances," said Kate.

"Perhaps it would be well to hear all she says on the subject;" and Hannah read the letter through aloud.

"O, it's to be in a hall, and we can go in street costume and sit in the gallery, and only look on; and that odd uncle of hers will go with us, and we needn't dance at all; that seems a little more reasonable, doesn't it?" said Kate.

"What a shrewd little thing she is for contriving," said Mary; "we are to go up there, and start with them. Do, now, girls, let us go; we never went to a real ball in the world, and this is such a good opportunity; besides, our spirits are not very lively just now, and it might do us good; though, dear me! I am really afraid we would shock the little widow with our plain dress; but the odd uncle,—somehow I don't care at all for him."

"Doesn't it look reckless and rash?" asked Hannah.

"And wouldn't it be better to keep a little more secluded?" asked Kate. "If we make acquaintances, we shall get ashamed of our clothes, and that will give us extra trouble."

"But why need we get ashamed of our clothes? are we so small-minded as that? Haven't we learned yet

that such feelings are all foolishness? and if we wish to learn anything, why not take the opportunities offered to do so, and be thankful for them? Our clothes are still neat and clean; and if the little widow and her odd uncle are not ashamed to accompany us, why should we be ashamed to go? The fact is, girls, we are poor; and we can't help it; but if we chose to, we could go to work by the day or week, and spend all our money for clothes, and look much better, or at least more fashionable and showy, than we do now; but would we be any better? should we, after all, feel any more independent, or have any more self-respect? I'm sure I like to see people dressed well, but always according to their means and circumstances. Don't, then, let us stay at home from the ball on account of our dress. If we thought of nothing but dress, it would then be so different; but we have higher aims, and we need not feel ashamed or afraid."

"How often do you think it is, girls, that we have just such a talk as this?" said Mary.

"Every time occasion requires it," said Kate, "and that is quite often. How much good such talks do us! They make us feel so much stronger and better."

"And it's no wonder, is it, that so many girls go farther and farther into fashion and show, when they have no such dear good talks as we do to encourage them to be independent? I really need my independence strengthened quite often."

"People in general think too little," said Hannah. "An hour of sound thought and reasoning would keep many a person from utter shipwreck. Now, girls, we have a right to judge by ourselves, as we think ourselves somewhat sensible, and like other people in nature. Who would you respect the more, — a lady who

dressed charmingly, and spent all her money to do so, or a woman who dressed even exceedingly plain in order to elevate her mind and prepare herself for future usefulness and happiness?"

"Why, the latter of course; that is reason."

"And reason is what we should make use of," said Hannah. "And now, dears, do you think we could gain anything by going to this ball — anything that will in after years be of use to us? If you do, let us go by all means, in spite of our dresses."

Neither of the girls spoke, and Hannah continued: "I am inclined to think it would be a benefit to us. I am anxious from curiosity to go. Let us see for once what they do at these balls that is fascinating enough to detain them till five o'clock in the morning."

"Yes, let us by all means. I always wanted to know," said Kate.

"I'm sure it will do us good," said Mary, delightedly. "I would like to go in full dress and dance. How they must enjoy it, to dress just as they please, and then dance well! Sometimes, O how I long to have nothing to do more than these rich ladies!"

"Sometimes I think it would be so delightful, but then" —

"We can talk of these things better on our return from the ball; and we have hindered already too long," said Hannah, sewing with redoubled energy. And so it was that the three sisters formed acquaintances through these invitations that were to affect their whole lives.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A SACRIFICE FOR PRINCIPLE.

"Don't lose my lace handkerchief, now; you know it's my last pretense to elegance; and I wouldn't have it used if it wasn't quite necessary that you have something that speaks of refinement," said Kate, giving Mary's dress an extra brush; "and don't soil it either, because you know I want to carry it to the ball."

"Don't let Mr. De Witt convert you to the Catholic faith," said Hannah, looking over her box of trinkets with the hope of finding something to improve Mary's wardrobe, but without success. "Let me see your boots again. Why, they look almost like new; that mucilage, without mistake, is an invention. I mean the idea of putting it on shoes; and, Kate, you ought to just color it black, get it patented, and advertise 'Windsor's Liquid Blacking for Ladies' Boots;' but then Mary will persist in wearing off one side of the heel, which gives her a kind of sideways look."

"You don't think there is any impropriety in Mary's going, do you?" asked Kate.

"Well, I've thought it over carefully, and I can't see that there is. She knows how to take care of herself; and Mr. De Witt is a gentleman," said Hannah.

"But how about our conclusions concerning gentlemen friends?"

"What matters it whether he is a gentleman or not? he is simply to me a musician and an agreeable person, and as such I shall treat him. I shall wait till circumstances are more favorable, and my wardrobe not quite so limited, before I fall in love," said Mary; "besides, I couldn't be safer with any one so far as love is concerned, than with a Roman Catholic; so, anxious hearts, be at rest. Music is my one lover, and I'm a faithful lassie;" and Mary made a graceful little courtesy.

"Mother wouldn't care, think she would?" asked Hannah.

"Not if she knew the whole case; of course," said Kate. "Mother isn't prudish, and she trusts us."

"Try to remember one thing," said Hannah, with gravity, "and that is to talk at least enough to prove you have a tongue. One wouldn't think, to hear you chattering with us, that you would turn into a mute when with a stranger. Such bashfulness does very well for young misses who have just left off pinafores; but for a young lady who is independently earning her own living, and trying to make a useful woman, it is altogether in the way. Of course if you have nothing to say, it will be better to say nothing; but you will have something to say, if only you can raise enough spirit to say it. Perhaps Mr. De Witt will have the power of 'calling you out,' as they say."

"I shall talk, if it is in my power to do so," said Mary. "I thought that subject over pretty thoroughly last night; and I concluded that I should make a dunce of myself if I didn't talk, and I'm bound to say something, if it isn't quite so nice; and if Mr. De Witt will talk about music, there will be no trouble, and I am almost sure he will; and coming home, you know, we can talk about the church. Maybe I can appear quite respectably."

"Don't do anything for effect, however," said Kate.

"Act out your own dear self," said Hannah, "and you will satisfy yourself and others too."

"It's wonderful how much advice I need," said Mary, "when I go away for about two hours; but I'll remember it. Adieu, fair ladies; it is time I went to Miss Brechandon's room to meet my escort."

"Remember all you see and hear," said Kate.

"And tell us how you would like to be a Catholic," said Hannah; "and don't for the world give a thought to your clothes; for it will only disturb you, and you look good enough; indeed, you look very good, and whoever slights you because you are not dressed more fashionably, isn't the person you wish for an associate; but you understand all this, you've heard it many times."

"Anything more?" said Mary, striking an attitude of meekness and patience.

"Yes," said Kate, "remember and not lose my handkerchief. Don't get so absorbed in the music as to drop the handkerchief, and never think of it again till I remind you."

"I'll keep it in one corner of my mind the whole time, Kate; and now I go; good morning."

Mr. De Witt, though his face was pale, and his eyes expressive of melancholy, had, after all, a sufficient degree of vivacity and humor, and this morning was especially good-natured and pleasant. His health was much improved, and to Mary he hardly seemed the same young man she assisted up the steps when she first came to the city. He was dressed very genteelly too, and gave her a bow and a smile so frank and gracious, she felt easy at once, and somehow they fell to conversing without any effort.

"Shall I help you to descend these steps, as you once assisted me in ascending them?" he said, when they had closed the outer door of the hall.

"It is much easier, they say," said Mary, "to go down than up, though the journey is usually pleasanter going up than down, I should think."

After this was said, Mary thought it a most untimely remark; but it started a pleasant conversation.

"Undoubtedly the path is pleasanter going up than down as regards our lives," said Mr. De Witt; "but climbing always requires exertion and self-sacrifice, and so there are comparatively few climbers; but I hope we are among the number, Miss Windsor."

"I hope so," stammered Mary; "but sometimes I am afraid I rise very slowly, and fall back very often."

"But what if you do. If your face is always toward the 'palace Beautiful,' and your heart is set on reaching it, you will surely arrive there at last."

"But time may not be long enough to take me there."

"But the end of time is only the beginning of eternity; and how can we labor in vain? 'What time denies, eternity will give.' Don't you believe it?"

"I don't know, but sometimes it seems that we have a very short time given us to accomplish great objects, especially for those who are poor."

Mr. De Witt smiled, but the old melancholy settled a moment on his face.

"It is hard to be poor," he said; "but it is harder to be sick, and lie days and days, and think how the time is passing away, while we are unable to improve it. While we can work, even if it is merely to support the wants of the body, we can feel ourselves growing strong, and time will not be lost; but to lie helpless,

with the fire of ambition burning in your heart, while you have no power to push forward your aims toward the object you long to attain, and count the days as they go by as entirely void of any accomplishment of yours, — if ever there is a time to think life short, Miss Windsor, it is then."

Just then they entered a car, and the conversation was discontinued.

"How grand!" said Mary, when they stood in front of St. Stephen's Church on Twenty-eighth Street, that imposing structure, built in the Romanesque style of architecture, which is a transition between the old Roman and mediæval Gothic style, and said to be the most magnificent church in the city.

"Its greatest attractions are within," said Mr. De Witt, and they mounted the steps, and passed into the church. He did not stop to sprinkle himself with holy water, or kneel and cross himself, as so many did; but when they had entered a pew in front of the high altar, he knelt and bowed his head as if in prayer. Mary looked about her with wondering eyes. She looked above, and her eyes were dazzled; for the ceiling was painted after the style of many of the oldest cathedrals of Europe, of an exquisite shape of lapis lazuli, or ultramarine blue, and studded over with golden stars. The upper part of the church was filled with rainbow tints; made from the light which was thrown through the gorgeous frames of stained glass of the two immense rose windows in the ends of the transept above the galleries, while the body of the church was lighted by four large arched windows on each side of the nave above the galleries, and a corresponding number below, filled with rich stained glass.

But most magnificent of all were the chancel and

altars, ornamented with gilded tracery upon the pillars and around the fretted frame-works that inclosed the paintings and ornaments, that literally covered the whole space from floor to ceiling. Back of the high altar was the picture of the Crucifixion, which covered eleven hundred and fifty feet in space. Mary studied this wonderful picture with intense interest, and wished many times that Kate was with her. It represented the moment when the Saviour cried with a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Above the clouds was the dimly sketched picture of the Father, with arms extended, and the Heavenly Dove, the Paraclete, issuing from his bosom and descending on a beam of light to the crucified Son, whose upturned face showed that He had caught a glimpse of the beautiful vision.

Upon the right hand stood Mary the mother of Jesus, her attitude and face expressive of anguish divinely supported. On the left, clasping the foot of the cross, was Magdalen; and the Apostles were grouped around. The ladder, the sponge and spear, and all the instruments of the execution, lay around on the ground, while in the foreground the rude Roman soldiery were "casting lots for his garments." The light from an unseen window above shone down upon this picture, and half startled Mary into the belief that she was looking at the reality instead of a representation.

Her heart was touched; and she half wished to kneel, as Mr. De Witt had done, in adoration and wonder. How earnest and devout all seemed! with what longing, trustful eyes they seemed to look at the picture and statue of the crucified Son! and how earnestly many of them thumbed a string of black beads,

saying their prayers. But O, the ceremonies were so long, and so much alike, that but for the music Mary would have grown tired; but even with this attraction she was glad when it was over, and she stood again with Mr. De Witt on the pavement.

"Did you like the music?" he asked.

"Like it? how could I help it? but somehow its grandeur seemed somewhat lessened by the tedious ceremonies," said Mary frankly.

"Undoubtedly it seemed so to you," said he, smiling, "but it is the boasted temple of ecclesiastical music in New York. Jenny Lind, Piccolomini, and most of the celebrated artists from Europe who have visited this country have sung or performed there."

The day was cool and delightful, and they did not take a car, but walked on slowly.

"Everything was so overwhelmingly grand," said Mary, "that really, when in the midst of it, I should think people would find it wholly impossible to concentrate their minds, and have a true understanding of worship and religion; and then all those ceremonies, which surely cannot be understood by the most of the congregation, seem to me so superfluous."

"Undoubtedly. Indeed, Miss Windsor, they often seem so to me; but they are to keep in memory the crucifixion of Christ; and though many do not understand them wholly apart from each other, yet as a whole they comprehend their teaching."

"But what good does the teaching do? does it elevate them?"

"If you consider the contemplation of Christ's sufferings for us and the worship of Divinity elevating, then I would say yes to your question."

"All seemed very devout and earnest," said Mary;

"and at first when I saw that most magnificent picture of the Crucifixion, I felt like falling down before it in adoration; but it was probably only the stirring up of my veneration and reverence, my religious nature, which would find something to worship if I had never heard of the true God. The fact is, Mr. De Witt, that which we are taught from infancy cannot leave us entirely; and everything was so new to me there I could not possibly feel lifted up or drawn nearer the Father and Son, though the pictures and ceremonies, you say, were all to keep fresh in our minds the divinity and sufferings of Christ."

"Early teaching exerts a great influence," said Mr. De Witt; "but there are those who come from the Protestant Church to the Catholic. Their childhood's teaching is set aside by the original thought and experience of maturer years."

"So people are changing continually in every direction; but circumstances and influence often have more to do with it than independent thought. The building and furnishing of St. Stephen's Church must have cost a great deal, Mr. De Witt."

"So it did; but the number of communicants in the parish is over twenty-five thousand."

"Yes, but many of them must be poor, and can ill afford to support such splendor."

"But they are willing to sacrifice much for the church; and every one feels a kind of ownership in the magnificent building."

"I am undoubtedly prejudiced by the teachings I have always received; but really I could feel the presence of Christ better to stand in the open field, with the great blue sky over my head, and only Nature's murmurings around me, than beneath that ceiling of

blue studded with golden stars, with the beams of light streaming through the stained glass, and even that boasted and cultivated music charming me; but you will pardon me for speaking so plainly, sir. They say my sisters and I are hardly like other girls; and we talk a great deal on all these subjects."

"You must have thought or talked of them to have your own ideas so positively," said Mr. De Witt, "and it is a pleasure to hear you express them. I have often thought of the money which is expended on the churches, Protestant as well as Catholic, and doubted myself whether it makes people any better, or whether any more are converted. If we could prove that it does increase the Christian flock, I suppose we would raise no more objections; but so long as we are in doubt, we indulge in doubtful speculations. Do you belong to any church, Miss Windsor?"

"No; but on account of this, do you suppose I receive any the less care and love from God? Do you think He any the less forgives my errors when I repent?"

Mr. De Witt was silent, and looked into Mary's bright face earnestly.

"Well, Miss Windsor," he said at last, "I see you have opinions of your own, and I am glad to see it. As for me, I have attended the Catholic Church ever since I can remember; and when I was twelve years old, it was decided that I should be a priest. But ill health changed the decision, and I think 'tis better so; for otherwise I should have lost what I have found in music. And now I've come to what I wish to say to you; and my invitation to you to go with me today was partly that I might say it. I know something of your situation from Miss Brechandon, who is

a clever soul, though stiff enough in religious creed; and I can feel your great desire to study music and receive first-class instruction. 'Tis seldom that I give much individual aid; for being ill so much gives me less time for action than most have; and when I am well, to make up for lost time, I devote myself to music, and therefore make few acquaintances, and learn the wants of persons seldom. For some wise purpose we have met, and your kind assistance up those tedious steps awoke in me an interest in you; for believe me, few young girls would have given their arm to a young man and a perfect stranger, forgetting the girl's diffidence and fear of seeming bold, in the desire to lend assistance. It was a little thing, but it touched my heart; and I did not forget you, and often wondered who you were, till Miss Brechandon told me what she knew of you, and at last, not much against my will, persuaded me to play eavesdropper. Then I've met you since, and one time heard you sing alto to a little piece, when your sister sung soprano. I have been thinking for weeks how I could assist you; and a way is now opened, an opportunity that might not come again in years."

"Indeed, Mr. De Witt, I did not expect this," said Mary, her heart beating quick, and a thousand thoughts flooding her brain all circled round with hope. "I have done nothing to merit this interest and kindness from you."

"Don't talk of that; you are striving to attain a worthy object, and all such merit assistance. I shall only aid you to help yourself. You already know that I am organist in —— Church. Only last Wednesday the lady who has sung first alto in our choir for six years at least, suddenly married, and went away to

the West; and her place shall be occupied by yourself, with your consent; and your salary shall be four hundred dollars."

He ceased speaking, and Mary stopped suddenly in the street an instant, and then went on. She did not speak. The pretty, rosy tinge had fled from her cheeks, and she looked pale and troubled, instead of joyous, as Mr. De Witt had expected. They walked on some time in silence, while Mary thought and thought. Should she accept? Four hundred dolllars a year would make her independent; and then how much she should enjoy the singing, and how much it would benefit her! It pricked her conscience to think of it. What would her parents say,—and friends? Would the girls agree to it, when they so much needed the money? O what a temptation it was! Mr. De Witt saw that her face was pale, and that she was undecided. She might think of it, and talk about it with her sisters, he said kindly, and let him know in the morning. Mary made an effort to speak; but the first word choked her, and her face grew red.

"You are very kind," she said finally; "and I thank you very, *very* much, and consider myself highly honored by your offer; but it has so confused me. To-morrow morning, as you say, I will let you know my decision."

Somehow Mary did not feel at all lively or boisterous; and she opened the door of her little room softly. It was very still inside; and she was somewhat surprised to find the girls, Hannah and Kate, sitting side by side on one of the little beds, with their arms about each other, and their faces drawn down solemnly and dolefully.

"What is the matter?" said Mary, stopping short.

"Well, we are hungry," said Kate; "and there is nothing to eat but that loaf of dry bread and the mug of syrup. We want some meat, and we were just condoling with ourselves a little, that's all."

The four hundred dollars a year offered her, Mary thought of with such a flutter of her heart, and such a rush of blood to her face, that she could not speak; so she sat down on the little bed with the girls, and dropped her head on Hannah's shoulder.

"I am hungry too," she said, after a moment's silence; "and the sight of all the splendor of St. Stephen's did not appease my hunger."

"Dear little girl," said Hannah, with her hand on Mary's head, "you should be at home, and run about as you like, and not have such trials so young. Don't you want to go home, dear, and let Kate and I remain? You can be so comfortable there."

"O, that's what you and Kate have been condoling about, to get rid of me, — I understand," said Mary, bobbing her head up and looking into the girls' faces.

In a moment she grew serious.

"Really, girls," she said, "would you be better off without me?"

"O, dear me, no," said Kate.

"Why, that's not the point at all," said Hannah; "but we think you would be better off; and you are young, you know, and have time enough to learn; that is why we suggest your going home."

"If that is all, girls, I shan't go. I can go hungry as long as you can; and I want to stay with you; besides, I don't want to leave my scholars, especially little Neil Blossom; and I just wish you would give up your private confabs on that subject."

"Well, we will consider it settled now," said Han-

nah; "and we will all stay together, and do the best we can; and I am so glad, Mary, that you wish to stay after all."

"It would be awful to have you go," said Kate; "but that dry bread and syrup! I am hungry enough, but I shall be hungrier than now before I can relish that."

"Girls!" Mary looked very grave and earnest.

"What? what is it?" asked Hannah anxiously.

"I have got some news," said Mary.

"Well, it's the first time you didn't mention it the first thing," said Kate. "If it is anything to increase our anxieties, I hardly know how we can endure it. Tell it, though, whatever it is."

"In the first place, I want to ask you if you think the Catholic Church is so very bad? I can't see but that Mr. De Witt talks like a Christian."

"Dear me!" said Hannah, "I suppose there are as good people among the Catholics as ever lived; and so it is in every denomination, of course; but I think it is a false church."

"Why, have you been having an argument with Mr. De Witt?" said Kate.

"But that isn't the idea," said Mary. "Now, girls, would you do anything to uphold this church?"

"Why don't you ask us if we would do anything to uphold what we didn't believe right?" asked Hannah.

"Which is to say you wouldn't," said Mary. "I knew it would be so; and so here is the news, — Mr. De Witt has made me an offer."

"Made you an offer!" exclaimed Hannah, giving Mary a sudden little shake, that sent her hair over her eyes.

"An offer of what?" screamed Kate, springing up and stamping her foot not very gently on the floor.

"O what a time!" said Mary, beginning to laugh; "not an offer of marriage, you silly girls! so keep quiet and listen, or I'll comb my hair that Hannah has shaken down before I tell you."

Kate sat down in a chair, and Hannah looked sober.

"Do you suppose," began Mary again, "that it would be wrong to write an article in favor of something which was against our belief, for a heap of money, if we really needed the money very much?"

"What is the child driving at? are you crazy, Mary?" said Hannah.

"Well, I will tell you now, sure. Mr. De Witt has offered me a salary of four hundred dollars a year to sing in the church where he plays."

"O, I wish he hadn't," groaned Kate.

"What an excellent chance if you had no conscience!" said Hannah.

"But what hurt can it do to sing beautiful hymns and chants to people?" asked Mary. "I am only one among many. I could go there quietly every Sunday, you know, and come away quietly; and what harm could possibly result from it?"

"What a lift it would be out of the Slough of Despond!" said Kate.

"I know it; but could you do it, Mary, and feel as free and as independent as you do now? Wouldn't there be something always heavy on your conscience, even if you received the four hundred dollars, which I must allow would make you quite independent in a pecuniary point of view."

"Well, only think how we need the money, and how much good it would do us. We may lose our

health living in this way; and by accepting the offer, I could take lessons and practice more."

"Do you really think of accepting the offer, Mary?" asked Kate.

"O dear, girls, it is so hard to give it up, it is such a good opportunity; but I couldn't accept, after all."

"Good! good! Mary, your decided words are meat and drink for me," said Kate, "and I feel stronger this minute. How we should despise ourselves, should we do what we believe not right! If you should sing in the Catholic church, you would be lending your influence in that direction; and that must be wrong."

"Still it may be only a superstitious notion," said Mary; "and I may be very silly in giving up such a rare opportunity. Don't you know, by accepting this position, we could all get along faster, and fit ourselves sooner to work in the world; and Hannah can write good articles, which will benefit people, and singing, you know, never did harm any one; and when I have gotten well started, I can resign my position, and take one more influential for good; besides, the Catholics do a great deal for humanity. St. Stephen's Church, they say, has a temperance society of one thousand members; and I am sure the preaching to-day was excellent. I wouldn't have thought of the minister's being a Catholic if I hadn't known. Mr. De Witt seems liberal too, much more so even than Miss Brechandon; and he doesn't observe all the forms of the church although he is a member. So why can't I believe the good part, and sing for them; nor feel responsible for that which I do not believe? The fact is, girls, I'm afraid we should find something to disbelieve in every church. At home we thought Mr. Hayes too strict and even uncharitable; and even Mr. Beecher we criticised somewhat."

"But that's not at all on the subject," said Hannah. "In the Catholic Church there is an aristocracy. I don't mean among the members; that is observable in every church: but it is an aristocratic form of government, so to speak, and the poor people are kept ignorant, and believe that if they confess their sins to the priest, they are safe. I know such intelligent members as Mr. De Witt understand the matter on a higher plane, but most do not; and then they pray to the Virgin Mary, and other departed beings they call saints; when we believe our prayers are heard and answered only when sincerely offered to our Heavenly Father. It is probable and even certain that they do much good by their benevolent institutions, etc.; but we think the general teaching is wrong and detrimental to the world. That the sincere members of that church are just as good as members of the Protestant church, and will be as surely saved, I have no doubt; but so long as we believe the church lends an influence which is not good, then is it not our duty not to lend our influence toward sustaining it?"

"For my part," said Kate, "I think I am somewhat prejudiced against the Catholics; and I think the Protestants are generally; and this feeling surely cannot be quite right."

"Of course it isn't right," said Hannah; "and the world cannot be united in good-will, and all the people feel as brethren, until this selfish sectarianism is dead. Because we do not quite agree with a creed does not condemn it, though we are to act according to our highest light, and try always to climb higher, and make improvements. None of man's institutions are perfect enough to need no improvement; and if any church lives, it must grow more liberal and charitable; and

when the Catholics and Protestants throw aside prejudice, and meet as brothers, in my humble opinion the false ideas of the Catholic Church will be abolished little by little, and an improvement be apparent in many directions."

"Hannah, why don't you found a new society? I do believe you are capable, and I will join it," said Kate.

"We are a society, we three," answered Hannah. "and have preaching oftener than most societies, I think."

"Hannah, why don't you write a book on religion?" asked Mary. "I believe you express some ideas worth knowing. Do tell me something about Dr. Chapin and his church. I forgot to ask. How did you like the sermon?"

"To tell the plain truth, we didn't listen to it as we ought, for Horace Greeley sat in front of us, and we gave most of our attention to him," said Hannah.

"Then you saw Mr. Greeley? good! Did he look at all as you thought?"

"I knew him at once," said Kate "though it's doubtful if I should have known him but for the newspapers stuffed in his pockets."

"O did he really have newspapers with him in church? how significant!" laughed Mary. "I wish I could have seen him."

"His head is bald, and his hair white; and he seemed to be very sleepy, and nodded a good part of the time," said Hannah. "I presume he didn't sleep much the night before."

"The collar of his overcoat was half turned in, and I had half a mind to pull it out; I dare say I could without his knowing; but others would have seen me," remarked Kate.

"He seemed very good-natured and easy," said Hannah, "and shook hands heartily with as many as a dozen after meeting was over, and talked and laughed like a common mortal."

"And undoubtedly had a good dinner when he went home. I wonder what he would have done had he known exactly how we felt sitting there behind him, and what we were obliged to eat for our dinners if we ate anything," said Kate. "Dear me! if it isn't hard enough for a girl to do anything, and no wonder when only one in a thousand attempts it. How the women do dress! I should think they would get disgusted with it, and turn their attention to something else. I believe, if ever I get rich, I'll prepare some kind of an arrangement for all girls who are trying to make their way in the world like us, to work a few hours in the day, just to earn their living, and give them most excellent wages, and good opportunity to study what they please."

"I'll assist you," said Mary; "but we must eat our dinners, or I shall starve."

They ate their dinners, after which they wrote their letters home as usual; and the sensitive mother's heart detected in them a tone of despondency, though they tried to write cheerfully. Mary hardly felt reconciled to giving up the rare chance which had been offered her; and she could hardly resist thinking yet of the good time they all might have if only she could earn four hundred dollars a year; and she wondered what Mr. De Witt would say, and if he would think her overscrupulous. But in the morning she gave him a refusal of his offer; and he looked at her in blank amazement, which changed to one of admiration; and then he gave her his hand, and simply said, "I didn't

expect such a sacrifice for principle in a young lady like you;" and then he called Miss Brechandon, for her door was open, and they stood in the hall near it. "Come here," he said; "Miss Windsor has refused that nice offer I made her. What do you think of such a young lady?"

Miss Brechandon looked a moment at Mary's pretty, flushed face, and then straight into the eyes of Mr. De Witt.

"If there's no trick of selfishness about it anywhere, I'll say I'm surprised, for one thing," she said; "and to think not one of them belongs to any church at all! I say such a course is worthy of the strictest Lutheran; for I'm sure the money's needed bad enough."

Miss Brechandon was obliged to blow her nose furiously just here, and Mary said:—

"I don't deserve any praise at all. I simply thought it would be wrong to accept, and so refused; though I shall never forget the favor."

"No, you never will, that's certain," said Miss Brechandon, striking her hands together, making a noise like a percussion cap; "such folks never do. You just go on now, David De Witt, you are needed here no longer; and, Miss Mary, you just come here, I've got something for you."

So, with a bow and a smile, Mr. De Witt passed out into the street, and Mary followed Miss Brechandon into her neat little room.

"Just sit down there, child, a minute," she said; and very soon she came with a glass of sparkling wine.

"Now just drink that; it will do you so much good."

"No, I can't, Miss Brechandon; I never drink wine," said Mary with an effort.

"Well, there!" and the glass went down suddenly on the table, and some of the purple juice was spilled.

"Real little Puritans you are, in everything but religion."

"Doing always what we think is right is our religion," said Mary, feeling for some reason the happiest she had for days.

"Well, well, go home, do, and give me time to think," said Miss Brechandon; and Mary ran home, glad enough to tell her eager sisters what had transpired.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A TASTE OF FASHIONABLE LIFE.

"GOING to a ball!" exclaimed Miss Brechandon. "Well, then, it's all up with you. Mind what I say. It will turn your heads." She shook her head dolefully, and continued as if to herself: "Yes, that's what ruins them, just what ruins them; they get bewitched, then, before you know it, they are in love, and then there's no more hope." She rubbed her hands together nervously, and the girls had never seen her act so strangely.

"There is not much danger in our case," said Hannah; "we shall hardly be likely to be drawn into the whirlpool of fashion, dressed in this manner."

"No matter about that. *She* wasn't dressed in ball costume," said Miss Brechandon, in a mysterious manner. It'll turn your heads. O what an age of delusions it is!"

"O, but just one ball, Miss Brechandon," said Kate; "the very first we ever attended."

"Yes, 'only one! the very first!' that's just what she said. Didn't you ever hear of the only one's being one too many? Fresh from the country, that's what they'll say, mark my words. They know just how to flatter and bewitch young girls. It's just what comes from not belonging to the church, and it's just what I told her. The church is the only safeguard

against the wiles of the devil. I *did* think, — but then no matter what I thought. There's no use in talking; I found that out years ago."

Miss Brechandon talked in such a mysterious, dubious manner, the girls felt a little gloomy.

"O fie! Miss Brechandon," said Mary. "We've no notion of getting bewildered over one ball, trust us for that;" and Mary gave Miss Brechandon's sleeve an affectionate pat.

"Almost the same words she said, and her eyes shone as full of innocence as the angels'," said Miss Brechandon.

The girls wondered who *she* was; but Miss Brechandon's face forbade questioning; and suddenly she turned about with a jerk, saying sharply, "Go, and be done with it; I'm always making a fool of myself;" and, going straight into her room, she slammed the door hard after her, and left the girls standing astonished in the hall.

They had started for the little widow's, from whence they were to proceed to Irving Hall. They had worked with renewed energy that week. The sacrifice of the four hundred dollars made them feel stronger and even more encouraged than before. Monday morning, while it was yet twilight in the hall, Miss Brechandon had knocked at the door, and appeared before them with a plate of steaming hot cakes, which she declared she wanted to get rid of, and she didn't know but it might save them some trouble, as they were always busy. When she was gone, the girls had fallen to eating them with a relish. The weather was frosty, but they could afford no fire when there was no use for it but to keep them warm; and for an hour or two they sat as usual at the little table, and sewed steadily while

they chattered merrily. They felt a little blue and cold, though their shawls were pinned closely about them; but they worked on without making any allusion to it. When Kate and Mary had gone to their respective labors, Hannah, whose mind felt a little lighter and more courageous than it had been for some time, fell to thinking of her manuscript. The result of her cogitations may be summed up in her concluding thoughts, as she put her work by. "The walk will undoubtedly do me good. I am almost shivering with cold; it will take but a short time; and if it isn't accepted, it won't make me any the worse off. How I wish I could afford to write all day or as long as I please! I feel just like it; but at least I'll leave this manuscript with some publisher." So she prepared herself for the walk, and, taking her manuscript, started on her errand. The walk did do her good. It warmed her blood, and sent it leaping through her veins; and she had felt so new and bright, that the publisher she called to see seemed to catch some of the same spirit, and shuffled the leaves of her manuscript in quite an enthusiastic manner, and treated her with considerable deference.

"I've no idea," she had said to herself, when in the street again, "that he will accept it; but I'm glad I brought it, for I feel better, and there's no harm in trying;" and she went home with renewed courage. Kate also had felt some of the same ambitious spirit, and had taken again to coloring photographs; not for work, but for practice, working at odd spells, and improving continually, though she had no teacher. Mary kept on the same line of duty, but was much cheered by the progress of her scholars, and the sheet of charming music which Mr. De Witt left with Miss Brechan-

don for her, with a pretty French phrase, and his own name marked upon it.

"It was so kind in Mr. De Witt," they had all said; and Mary set herself to learning it immediately.

So the night of the ball came at last; and after a great deal of fixing and chattering, the girls had declared themselves "fixed" as much as they could be with nothing to fix with, and had started on their way feeling a little odd and strange. As usual, when Miss Brechandon heard them tripping down the stairs one after the other, she put her head into the hall and asked by her manner where they were going. After she had expressed herself and then slammed the door so unceremoniously, the girls walked on, smiling amusedly and speaking in whispers until they reached the street. It was dark when they arrived at the little widow's, and the gas in the great carved chandeliers was lighted; and the little widow sat as usual in her lounging chair by the window.

As she greeted them, she scanned them closely, and a close observer might have noticed that her pretty lip curled slightly, and that she gave a little shrug to her sloping shoulder; but she said in an absent kind of way, "Yes, these are your sisters; not much like you. Take seats; there are a good two hours yet before we start for the ball."

"We thought it would be better to come early," suggested Hannah.

"O yes, it's not at all the thing for girls to be out alone in the streets. I told uncle you wouldn't accept the invitation, for you were not at all fashionable; but he declared you would, and insisted that I should send you one at least. He has no belief in women's not being fashionable from choice; and I presume he is

right." There was a touch of sarcasm in her tone, the cause of which might be explained by the fact that her uncle had promised her a new gold chain enameled with black, with a gem attached containing a diamond, if the girls refused the invitation; but she did not tell this, and they tried to feel easy and welcome; but somehow they much dreaded the odd uncle, and they moved nearer each other on the crimson sofa, and seemed as green and unsophisticated as country girls we read about. The little widow excused herself for a moment; and when she was gone, a confused whispering commenced.

"This is a pretty scrape!" said Hannah. "Mrs. Waterhouse and her uncle evidently bet on our accepting the invitation. Dear me! I wish we had stayed at home."

"She didn't expect us to accept," whispered Mary, in a tone full of disgust not to be misunderstood, even under cover of the whisper, "and *I* saw her looking at our clothes sharply, and she isn't pleased with us; but fie! let us fight it out on this line, and make believe we haven't the least suspicion of the truth."

"That is evidently the best way to do," said Kate; "but I do wish — hark!"

There were heavy steps in the hall. The door was slightly ajar, and they heard a man's voice, deep and rich, but sneering and bitter. "I told you so," he said. "Three silly girls, no doubt hunting for beaux, and I've got to escort them. The Furies! on time too, bah! don't try to make me believe any more of your nonsense. Literary, artistic, musical!" and then there followed a forced laugh.

"Help you out of the fix now? I'll do as I agreed. Come, don't stand shivering there; take me in and in-

troduce me to the" — the word was lost; the girls clung closer together. They entered the parlor, — the little widow in her elegant black dress, and behind her a tall, muscular man, with dark face and heavy hair all in confusion, and dropping over his wide forehead. His eyes were of an exquisitely soft and melting blue; but the expression of distrust and almost fierceness as much obscured the color as the stormy, billowy waves break up the gentle azure of a sleeping lake. The lower part of his face was obscured by a heavy growth of shaggy beard; but his form, though muscular, was most harmoniously proportioned, and his manners, though somewhat reckless and fierce, were graceful, and *would* display a native polish which he seemed to try to avoid. He scowled on the three young girls sitting closely together on the sofa; and Kate, who had been studying the matter with resentment, flashed back upon him a look as defiant and significant at least as his own.

"Good evening, sir," she said as they all arose and bowed to him. "We are very glad of an opportunity to go to a ball, and generally take advantage of all our opportunities, which are few enough." She said this scornfully, and received a sly nudge on both sides from the girls.

"You like balls, then?" he said, flinging himself into a chair, and assuming a most "don't care" attitude.

"How do we know till we have tried them? It's no virtue in a person to like or dislike a thing that she knows nothing of," said Kate, inwardly thinking she would like to see the man imprisoned for a short time at least.

"Which one is the artist?" he said, abruptly turning to Mrs. Waterhouse.

"I am," said Kate decisively, resolving in her mind to meet the man with his own weapons.

"And *you* are the blue-stocking, I know," he said, pointing to Hannah, whose face colored instantly with indignation; and she heartily wished she had never been so silly as to answer the letter, for the man was a bear at least, she thought.

"I write a little when I please," she said, not recognizing the fib till she had told it; for if there was anything she didn't do, it was to write when she pleased.

"And you teach music?" to Mary.

"I endeavor to, sir," with a most comical display of dignity.

The man laughed again, loud and harsh, the girls thought.

"You'll do," he said, and, wheeling himself near the gas-light, drew from his pocket a rumpled paper, and soon seemed oblivious to all but its contents. The girls sat as still as mice a long, long time, it seemed to them an age, while the uncle read; and the little widow, at the farther end of the parlor, worked over a pile of worsted.

"Uncle," she said after a while, "it's time to go."

He threw his paper down in a heap, and looked as if he had just been awakened out of a deep sleep.

"O, the ball, that's it, these ladies wish to go to the ball;" and he gave them a sharp look from under his scowling brows. How those three girls wished themselves at home in their little room! How they regretted accepting the invitation, and how they wanted to flee away! but they had started, and they meant to go through with it. They were not afraid of the man; but they despised him, and shrank somewhat from his fierce look and words. It was an adventure

at least, Mary thought, though she clung to Hannah's sleeve with her arm behind Kate's back.

"Well, Lisa, are you ready?" asked her uncle.

"I am not going," said the little widow, absorbed in drawing a green thread of worsted through the canvas.

"O, you are not going?" he sneered; "you back down, and leave me to fight the battle." He started up, and strode into the hall, coming back soon, muffled in an overcoat and a strange fur cap.

"Well, ladies, if you are ready, we will start for the ball." The girls arose.

"Good night," they said to Mrs. Waterhouse.

"Good night," she replied shortly, and kept on with her work; and the girls passed out into the hall feeling much as if they had done something of which they were ashamed. When they reached the street, they had a strong desire to leave Mr. St. Maur, and walk home as quickly as possible; but he said, "This way," with so much authority that almost before they knew it, they were walking after him. He seemed to act as odd and ungallant as possible, and hardly spoke a word the whole way, which, however, was but a short distance.

"I feel just like a fool," whispered Hannah; "and if ever we get through with this scrape it will be some time before I get into another like it."

"Only think, that little goose of a widow has sent us off alone with this great bear," said Kate, making a grimace at the great overcoat and fur cap.

"Yes, and we shall be disgraced forever if he goes on in this way," whispered Mary. When they arrived at the hall, they found that the band had just begun to play. They followed Mr. St. Maur around the

gallery, where sat a few persons, looking down on the waxed floor, where were the managers walking briskly around in their dress-coats and white gloves. They sat down, side by side; and in a moment all was forgotten but the brilliant scene which was soon spread out before them, for couples began to pour in through the doors and promenade slowly around the room, while the band kept playing; and everything grew merry and exciting. What a brilliant array of dress there was, what long trains, what beautiful women! A subtle perfumery floated through the room; and the air seemed full of intoxicating draughts. The music ceased for a moment; and then there came the hum of voices, and sets began to form for a quadrille. Soon the dancing commenced.

"O dear, girls, how I wish I was down there!" said Mary, leaning forward and gazing with wide-open eyes. "There is one lady with a street suit on, yes, two. Don't they look splendid, all of them I mean? It's no wonder they stay till five o'clock, is it? I should think they never would want to go home. Don't they feel happy?"

"Why were we born to be excluded from such pleasure?" said Kate. "Isn't that pink-cheeked girl just down there dressed in the most charming style? She looks like a fairy; and how graceful she is!"

Hannah, usually so regardless of dress and fashion, looked on this scene, so new to her and so gorgeous, and thought, though she did not say it, —

"How nice it is to be pretty, and graceful! I wonder why it is some are made so plain, and some so beautiful. How would I look, I wonder, on the floor?"

Mr. St. Maur, as soon as they were seated, had left them; but looking up suddenly, as she thought this, Hannah saw him standing just behind them, gazing at them intently; but when she met his eye, he turned about suddenly and strode off. He came back soon, however, and touched her on her shoulder, saying, in his authoritative way, "Ladies!" They all looked around; a slender young man stood by his side in ball costume. "I've brought Mr. Early to talk to you," he said. "The Misses Windsor, Tommy." The girls blushed and bowed; and Tommy, who had a few freckles on his nose, and a slight mustache, made one of his most charming bows, with his eyes fixed on Mary's pretty face. Kate's lip curled slightly, and Hannah's nose took a turn upward, while the two nudged each other, and looked steadily down at the scene below, which was just then the bewildering waltz. Tommy stationed himself near Mary, and directed his conversation to her entirely.

"Do you dance?" he asked.

"Not at balls," said Mary.

"The next dance is a cotillon. You can dance that," he said. "Go down with me please, and enjoy it."

"I would like to," said Mary, looking longingly down upon the merry dancers; "but then" —

"O, yes, go; it's no harm, and I'm sure you'll be delighted," said he.

"I should like to dance, it is so enchanting," said Mary, looking sideways at Hannah and Kate, who looked as solemn as though listening to a dry sermon.

Hannah shook her head without looking up, and Kate arched her brows and looked forbidding; but Mary said to herself, —

"They don't like it, but what's the harm? I'm old enough to know something, and it would do me good, I am sure, to dance once; and I want to go down there and see them when in their midst; it will be so much more satisfactory. I dare say Hannah and Kate are too strict; besides, it all came through Hannah that we are here, and I mean to go. It can't do any harm."

The waltzing was finished, and a promenading and laughing and talking commenced.

"You will go, Miss Windsor, I am sure," said Tommy; and Mary, having concluded that she had a right to do as she pleased, consented.

"I shall go down with Mr. Early to dance a cotillon," she said to her sisters, in a very independent tone.

"Mary!" said Hannah in a reproachful tone, — Tommy had stepped one side for a moment, — "you must not go; really you ought to know better. That fop! We have been silly enough already; pray don't let us entirely lose our senses and reason."

"She won't go," said Kate. "I shall think her crazy if she does."

"Yes, I am going," said Mary, using as little reason as people generally do in the whirl and excitement of a ball. "I have promised Mr. Early, and I want to dance at a real ball, — it's no harm;" and almost before they were aware, the animated young girl, bewitched by the splendor and display and the fascinating music, threw her hat and cloak in Hannah's lap, and, taking the young man's arm, marched off. As soon as she had gone, Mr. St. Maur took her seat.

"I suppose *you* would like to dance too, if you had partners?" said he, in a sarcastic tone.

"I don't know who has a better right than we," said Kate, determined his sneers should not frighten her into trying to make a good impression. "We did not come to dance; but then I suppose we might by trying."

"O yes, if you had partners; there's that sister of yours marching along as proud as a belle."

"Which she has a right to do," said Kate again, exceedingly vexed with Mary, but determined not to show it. "Why are you not on the floor?"

"Why? because I don't choose to be there. I'm not so fond of making a fool of myself, by mixing in with such a parcel of flirts and dandies."

"I dare say," said Kate saucily, "there are as good people on the floor dancing as you are."

"So you don't have an exalted opinion of me, Miss Artist?"

"I think you have treated us with as little kindness and politeness as I at least expected," said Kate; "and I shall be most heartily glad when this is over, and I am at home."

"You are decidedly plain in your remarks; you would like me to dawdle, and flatter you," sneered he.

"I don't care what you do. I dare say we can take care of ourselves."

"For mercy's sake! Kate, don't get the lion roused," whispered Hannah, who had been intently watching Mary's maneuvers.

"I'm not afraid of him; and I am going to give him a piece of my mind," Kate whispered back.

In the mean time Mary was among the dancers. She had gone down very briskly with Mr. Early, forgetful of her dress, and everything but the exciting

music and flying feet. They promenaded very respectably through the room, and took their places in an obscure corner. They commenced to dance, but the dance was unlike what Mary expected; and she became confused and embarrassed, and all at once stepped full upon the long train of a lady in the set next to theirs, and then stumbled herself. The lady looked back over her shoulder with a most scornful flash of her eyes, and said, so that Mary heard her plainly, "Mr. Early has got a perfect little dowdy and bungler for a partner," and some one replied, —

"A miss from the country! awkward and green."

O, how Mary's face flushed then; and how sorry she was that she had not remained with the girls. She wondered if they saw her blunder, and hoped Mr. Early hadn't heard the remarks. After a while, however, becoming more accustomed to the figure, she was dancing very well, and enjoying it, when suddenly, as she turned toward the wall, she met, to her amazement, the great mournful eyes of Mr. De Witt fixed upon her. Again she became confused, and again blundered; and how glad she was when the dance was through! Mr. De Witt approached her immediately, and cordially shook her hand.

"You are enjoying it?"

"No, I am not," answered she frankly; "and I don't want to stay down here another minute. I didn't know before that you danced."

"Neither do I," he said, smiling. "I met a friend on the street a short time ago, and he insisted on my coming in for a few moments; so I have been looking on. I didn't think you were going to dance, Miss Windsor."

"Neither did I," said Mary, in a not very amiable

tone, "and neither will I again. I am going up to the gallery where my sisters are. Good-night, Mr. De Witt."

She took Mr. Early's arm, and started toward the door.

"Good night, Miss Mary," said Mr. De Witt, watching her in an abstracted manner until she had disappeared.

"You didn't stay on the floor long," said Mr. St. Maur, when Mary stood near him and her sisters, and Mr. Early had vanished. "Why didn't you try a waltz?"

"I don't know how to waltz," said Mary.

"O, you don't? Did you enjoy the cotillion?"

"No, sir."

"Didn't, eh? What was the matter?"

"I suppose she simply didn't enjoy it," said Kate, moving and giving Mary a seat. "I would like to go home. I am sleepy, and tired of the affair."

"So am I," said Hannah. "It must be very late."

"Only half past twelve," said Mr. St. Maur. "Five o'clock is the time to break up; and supper comes at two. You'll stay for that?"

"We ate our supper at a respectable hour before we came," said Kate; "and eating at two o'clock is not our habit; and so, if you please, we will go home."

"You are decided, then?" said Mr. St. Maur, looking at Kate with a strange, quizzical look, and speaking in a tone a trifle more polite.

"We have stayed as long as we wish," said Hannah. "If you wish to stay longer, we can go alone."

"I am at your service," he said, "and glad to get away so early."

And so they went.

They passed Mr. De Witt on the stairs, and he bowed to them pleasantly.

"Who is that white-faced young man?" said Mr. St. Maur, abruptly.

"A friend of ours," answered Kate, in a tone that forbade any more questions.

"Don't you think I have done my part toward escorting the ladies to the ball?" asked Mr. St. Maur.

"Undoubtedly," answered Kate, who seemed to take upon herself the responsibility of answering all his questions. "There is a car, sir, that will take us home; and we will trouble you no longer."

"Very well," he said, hailing the car.

He assisted the girls to enter, and then passed in after them, and, sitting down, remained silent the whole distance; while the girls, tired, sleepy, and disheartened, leaned on each other, and wished they were at home. When they arrived at their place of destination, Mr. St. Maur assisted Kate to alight last, and said to her in a half whisper, —

"You think me a bear?"

"You are responsible for my impressions concerning you," said Kate.

"Yes? am I? What are you painting?"

"A design."

"Will you tell me what it is?"

"In the Orchard."

"And you attempt a design like that?"

"We attempt many things, sir, which we cannot accomplish."

"But you will accomplish this?"

"I hope to."

"And sell it?"

"I don't know, sir. Good night."

They were at the foot of the steps.

"Good night," he said to all, and instantly walked away.

"O dear, I'm *so* tired!" said Mary. "I'm sick of balls."

"All but codfish," said Kate, dragging herself up the steps.

Miss Brechandon opened the door.

"So soon?" she said. "How happened it?"

"We don't like balls, and we got as much of them as we want," said Kate.

Miss Brechandon shook her head.

"O, no," she said. "You are tired now; but then you do seem to feel different from *her*. *She* was so full of animation, and stayed until five; but it won't be long before you will be bewitched to go to another."

"Never," said Hannah, with a scowl; and they went to their room.

"I have seen some trials in my life," said Hannah, when they had entered their room; "but I will say I never passed such a disagreeable, wretched evening before."

"Nor I," said Kate; "but if Mary had stayed in her place, we shouldn't be quite so much in disgrace as we are now. She acted like one possessed. Going down there in that threadbare suit of hers, and with that little dandy too! I do believe there is a spirit of evil in such places, that takes possession of people. At first I was charmed. I was bewitched to be on the floor; but I got so tired of it; and I am now just as much at a loss to know how they can stay till five o'clock, as I was before I went."

"I knew you would commence on me as soon as we were alone, and I suppose it's well enough; but I can

tell you one thing, it won't do any good; for I am as ashamed and disgusted with it as you are; and that little fop! O how I would just like to box his ears this minute!"

"Why, wasn't he polite?"

"I don't know, and I don't care. I only know I despise the little simpering dandy."

"You are the only one in fault after all," said Hannah. "Poor Tommy probably acted as usual; and because you think you disgraced yourself with him, you despise him."

"Who said I disgraced myself?" said Mary, who was tired and irritable; "but then I did," she continued, "and Mr. De Witt saw it all."

"Didn't you dance well?" asked Kate.

"Dance well? I didn't *dance* at all. I just hopped around in confusion; and I don't think I'll ever again have a desire to be a fashionable woman. They lace till they can hardly breathe, and powder their faces, and no doubt paint; and then they are *so* cross."

"All of them?" asked Hannah, laughing in spite of her weariness.

"They are all alike probably; and the one that had that horrid long train acted like a snapping turtle. How magnificent she thought she looked! I'm just disgusted with fine clothes."

"Well, this is a lesson I shan't soon forget; and I haven't forgotten that it all came out of my answering that letter either," said Hannah; "but if only the little widow and her uncle had treated us a little more respectfully, I would have found less fault; for it was really a treat to go to a ball."

"I really hope," said Kate, "that we never shall

see that man again. The little widow said he was a saint. She must have a poor opinion of saints. She said, too, that he was always helping the poor. He showed little signs of it to-night. Dear me!"

"How shall we feel to-morrow, do you think?" asked Mary. "You know we can't rest as we used to at home; and such doings don't pay for us at least."

"Mr. St. Maur will haunt me all night, I am sure," said Kate; "those distrustful, vigilant eyes of his, the heavy, rumpled hair, and shaggy beard; and that voice,—how it makes me shudder to think of it!"

"Somehow I shan't think of him so much as of Mr. De Witt, as he looked when I first saw him in the ball-room. That mournful look in his great eyes seemed a reproof to me; and his face was paler than usual," said Mary.

"*I* shall think of the little widow as much as anything, sitting so stiff at the farther end of the room, and not deigning to notice us. O, what a mortification that was!" said Hannah.

And so they did dream and mutter in their sleep, and their slumbers were not sweet nor refreshing.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AFTER THE BALL.

In the morning the girls awoke with blinding headaches, and their tempers sadly soured. Everything looked so cold and dismal and burdensome; and then they were so dissatisfied with themselves. Besides, Mary had a severe cold in her head, and kept sneezing very loud and forcibly, and breaking in upon her own or her sisters' remarks.

"I do think," said Kate at last, "that you sneeze louder than there is any necessity for. You jar everything near you."

"Well, I don't," answered Mary, sneezing again. "I can't help it; and I guess it troubles me as much as it does you; and I'm going to have a fire too; what is the use in hoarding up a little coal forever? I guess we needn't freeze to death."

"I think we need a fire now, if any time," said Hannah, shivering. "I can't sit here and sew to-day without a little warmth in the room."

So a fire was built in the little stove, and it shone and sparkled in the grate, and gave things a more cheerful aspect.

"Good luck for us that to-day is Saturday," said Kate, when they all sat around the fire. "This work must be carried home this afternoon; and after paying our rent, we shall have a little money. Do let us take

it and buy us something to eat for to-morrow. I can't live another Sunday on dry bread and syrup. It does very well when we are busy at work; but when we are idle, it becomes a nuisance."

"I'm agreed," said Hannah. "I am going for my story to-day, too. If I don't wear it out lugging it from one place to another all over the city, it will be a wonder. How this thread kinks and breaks!"

"Yes, and how stiff the cord is! I can hardly get my needle through it; and my fingers are pricked in a half-dozen places. I wish I was tucked into a feather-bed this minute. That horrid ball!"

"Don't mention it," said Hannah. "I was going to suggest that we entirely drop the subject; for it only aggravates us."

"I want to ask one question first," said Kate. "Do you suppose Mr. St. Maur introduced 'Tommy' to us to tempt us to make fools of ourselves?"

"Yes, I do; and that is all I shall say on the subject," said Hannah.

"I don't care for him," said Mary; "he isn't worth minding any way;" and the subject was dropped, and seldom referred to afterward.

It was a drizzly, disagreeable day, and the streets were lined with black mud, that would cling to one with impertinent tenacity. Yet in spite of this, in the afternoon, Hannah and Kate started on their respective errands, — Kate with a bundle of work, and Hannah with a little hope, which she tried to smother, by saying over and over to herself, "Don't be silly; it won't be accepted, you know it won't. Of course not, there's no hope of it at all; but then it will be better to get the manuscript, and not leave it in their hands forever."

So she trudged on down town, and Kate up town, crossing the streets and splashing the mud over their boots at every step. Their success was thoroughly discussed at night when they returned, as they sat close together in the dim twilight. Kate arrived first, as out of sorts and discouraged as one could imagine. Her shawl was dripping with water, and her skirts bespattered and besmeared with mud, while her boots looked more like the cow-hides of an old farmer than the dainty boots of a lady.

"What a time you must have had!" said Mary, trying to do something, she hardly knew what, to better the poor girl's situation. "Does it rain?"

"Rain? yes, and everything else disagreeable. What a wretched time I have had!"

"Of course you have," said Mary, taking off the wet shawl from her sister's shoulders. "It's too bad. Here! Let me unbutton your boots. Why do you think it is Hannah don't come?"

"I don't know; but I pity her if she has had such bad luck as I have."

"Bad luck? what is it?"

"Couldn't get any more work: now what are we going to do?"

Hannah opened the door then.

"Kate could get no more work," burst out Mary, the first thing.

"Couldn't?" said Hannah, in a not very dubious tone. "Don't worry over that, girlies, look here;" and Hannah drew a roll of bills from the bosom of her dress. "A bad beginning makes a good ending."

Mary, who had been unbuttoning Kate's boots, sprang to her feet and gave Hannah a lively hug over her dripping shawl, and a kiss on her wet cheek.

"O, O, O! you got paid for your story. Hurrah for the 'Mystery of Murky Hollow!'" she exclaimed.

Kate forgot her misfortunes in an instant, and stood up with one boot half off, and took the greenbacks from Hannah's hand, and began to count them.

"Ten, twelve, seventeen, twenty. Twenty dollars. O Hannah, we are rich; but the best of it is, your story was accepted. Pooh! I wouldn't care now if I was soaked in mud. It seems rather a luxury than otherwise;" and Kate looked at her besmeared skirts complacently; and then they all joined in a happy, merry laugh.

"Just what I thought," said Hannah, "as I was coming home; and I do believe there was a grin on my face the whole way. I never knew mud and rain to seem of so little consequence before, and I never felt quite so important. I was so anxious to get home, it seemed as if I couldn't get along fast enough; and what must I do, when coming up the stairs, but rush straight against Mr. De Witt, mud and all, and we both came near falling down; and what a fall would there have been, my countrymen!"

They all laughed again.

"Now this has happened," said Kate, "my adventures seem more ludicrous than disheartening; but tell us what the publisher said. Did he like the story?"

"He didn't say much about it, only that he would pay me twenty dollars for it, though he shouldn't use it for several weeks; but I was surprised that he took it at all. I didn't wait for praise, but took my twenty dollars, and came home as soon as possible."

"I knew it was a good story," said Mary. "Kate and I are not so poor judges, after all. Twenty dol-

lars! O you dear children, *can* you realize the grandeur of that?" and Mary bustled around, hanging up wet shawls and hoods. "I had only just the 'least little faint hope,' and chided myself for that."

"Now I want to hear about your luck and adventures," said Hannah to Kate. "I'm almost glad you couldn't get any more work, on my account, for I am going to write another story."

"Perseverance has done so much for you, I shall try coloring photographs again," said Kate, with a gleam of renewed ambition in her eye; "but I had an adventure that I must tell you about. After I had found that I could get no more work, I started for home with a heavy heart, revolving in my mind what should now be done. I was so busy thinking, that I hardly knew where I was going or what I was doing, and so walked straight into a ridiculous mud-puddle. If that had been all, it would hardly be worth relating; but I fell down, for the first time since I came to New York, flat into the mud, which spattered into my face, and entirely covered my hands. I got up as quickly as I could, so ashamed and disgusted and everything; and looking up, what should I behold but the great overcoat and fur cap of Mr. St. Maur? and there was such a look on his face! I can't define it; but though he seemed inwardly convulsed with laughter, there was, or else I imagined it, a look of pity in his eye. I was hurrying away as fast as I could; but he caught hold of my shawl, and said, as he pulled a large handkerchief from his pocket, 'Here, Miss Windsor, take this; ladies' handkerchiefs are so small;' and dropping it on my arm, he walked away. I could have screamed with vexation and mortification; but seeing I was in the street, I contented myself with shedding a few tears.

That man is bound to see us in our worst moods; and I kept wishing over and over we never had set our eyes on him."

"Perhaps we never shall again; and after all, why need we care for him? he is nothing to us," said Hannah.

This was one of the joyful times for the Windsor girls, and caused them to think there was no use in desponding, for good luck *would* come around once in a while to the persevering and determined. After this times seemed a little easier; and Hannah wrote busily, while Kate put on the finishing touches to her design, and practiced photograph coloring during her leisure moments until she began to think herself competent to attempt coloring for remuneration. Then she went again to an artist's gallery; this time choosing one of considerable note and reputation. She took some photographs home as usual to color for specimens, and worked over them long and carefully, and saw herself how much she had improved since her last attempt. She carried the pictures home, and the artist said they were very good, but she needed more practice; and then he told her a little incident, which pleased and even encouraged her.

"Ten years ago," he said, "a man came to me for work, just as you did. I talked with him, and thought him well skilled in the business of coloring. I had had less experience then than now; and having a picture I was anxious to have colored for the window, I gave it to him. He brought it back in a few days so wretchedly done, I could hardly tell if the object belonged to the human species. Of course I gave him no more work; but now he is one of the first artists and photograph colorists in the city, and he has a

studio on Broadway; so take courage, perseverance will overcome all obstacles. I see at once that you have talent, but you have not practiced sufficiently yet to do first-class work;" and so Kate was encouraged, and continued to practice a few moments now and then, hunting all the galleries in the city, and asking for photographs thrown by. She tried to get more needle-work, but was unsuccessful; and times began to grow hard again. Letters often came from home full of consoling and comforting words, and often containing a few dollars, which helped them greatly; but they laid their plans wholly independent of this help, determined to help themselves as far as possible. Mary continued to teach her scholars, and they all learned to love her; but one had ceased to take lessons on account of illness, and so there were only three to add to her income.

Hannah's twenty dollars grew less and less, while she wrote on, relating, in the most startling manner possible, murder scenes, robberies, disclosing mysteries, and making astonishing denouements. It was one very cold, bleak day, when she and Kate were returning home in a car from a walk up town, that she first saw a few chapters of the first story she had sold, in print. She bought the paper containing it of a little dirty-faced newsboy; and sitting closely together, she and Kate began to read it over eagerly. It was illustrated by the most startling picture of a man in the act of hurling a beautiful girl into the seething waters.

While they read, they were conscious of a person's entering the car and taking a seat by the side of Hannah; but they were too much absorbed to look up until the story was finished; then glancing around, they saw those blue, penetrating eyes of Mr. St. Maur.

Hannah's first thought was to hide the paper; but her next told her that would be folly; so both bowed to him a little stiffly. He touched the paper with a scornful gesture.

"Do you read trash like this?" he asked, and looked straight at the illustration of Hannah's story. The fictitious name told no tales. "There are a great many things that are injurious to people's minds," he said, "and this paper is one of them; and the writers had better go out to service than help fill these pages."

He looked straight at Hannah, as if he suspected the truth; and she dared not look up, through fear of committing herself. He seemed a little less fierce than usual; but Hannah felt as if she had no word of justification to utter, and was silent; but Kate said, looking resolutely in the man's eyes, —

"Wealthy people cannot understand the wants of the poor, and condemn them for much which, if in their place, they would do themselves."

"That may be in most cases, but it does not make a wrong thing right."

He said this almost kindly; and Hannah ventured to look into his face. How strong and grand he looked! and she thought, "If one could be shielded and assisted by a great man like this one, even with all his fierceness and plain speaking, how restful it would be!" but she said in her usual decisive way, "Yet, sir, though wrong surely can never be right, the person may sometimes be justified for committing a wrong act."

He looked at her intently an instant, as though the expression was an excuse for something he could not forgive. He glanced at the paper again. "The

writers of these stories," he said, "injure themselves, as well as the public; as wrong actions always injure the actors. People who can use their minds only to excite the most heathenish propensities in their readers, are a pitiable set of beings."

Hannah dropped her eyes with a sense of shame, and the paper fell from her lap to the floor; nor did she touch it again only with her foot. Little more was said until they arose to leave the car.

"You stop here?" said Mr. St. Maur.

"Yes," replied Hannah, drawing her shawl closely about her, and passing on. "Good day, sir."

"Good day," he said; and then to Kate, —

"Is your design finished?"

"Nearly; good day;" and the two girls left the car, and walked on without glancing back.

"I told you," said Kate, "that man is destined to see the very weakest and worst phases of our character."

"I almost wish we hadn't bought that paper," said Hannah. "It costs six cents, and I left it on the floor. No doubt Mary would like to see it. I am sure he mistrusted that I wrote that story we were reading when he entered the car."

This little incident exerted a great influence over Hannah's mind; and continually as she wrote, the scorn in those blue eyes haunted her; and she only consoled herself by saying over and over, "In just a little time I will give up this style of writing, and do better."

And so she wrote on, often laying aside her pen to go into the streets to make observations; and as Kate no longer had work, and Mary's scholars were now only three, their future began to look very dark again.

"If only I can finish this story, so as to get the pay for it before Christmas, I shall be perfectly satisfied," said Hannah one day to her sisters.

"But suppose you can't, what then?" asked Mary.

"If I can't, then our Christmas will be the saddest we ever knew," said Hannah, as she numbered the pages of her manuscript.

"It is weakness to borrow trouble, mother says," said Kate; "and I have a little project in view, which may give us a Christmas dinner."

"Then make it known immediately," said Mary; "for if there is anything we are in need of just now, it is a new project."

And Kate replied, with a very wise look, "My picture is nearly finished, and my teacher says it is *very* good; and when he says that, you may be sure he means it decidedly; and I am going to try to sell it."

"But will he allow it?" answered Hannah.

"He must, for we need the money; and I have besides, you know, a half-dozen drawings and one painting for the exhibition."

"But it is very difficult, I am sure," said Hannah, "for an obscure artist like you to sell a picture; and I must confess that I have little hope in that direction."

"But I can try; and if I fail, it will not be the first failure I have known; and therefore I can bear it."

"But where will you try to sell it?" asked Mary.

"O, I shall try to have it hung in one of the galleries on Broadway; and it being just before Christmas, it may find a sale of some kind."

"But don't get your expectations too high," said Hannah, remembering her own disappointment when her manuscript was rejected.

"I'll try not to," said Kate, thinking of that same

unhappy time, and how Hannah had cried, and they all had felt so disheartened; but she started for Cooper's with higher hopes and ambitions than she would confess she felt, and went to work on her picture with renewed courage. It was almost night when she gave it the last touch with her brush, and, having carefully wrapped it in paper, started for home.

"O, she has brought it," exclaimed Mary, as Kate entered the room. "Quick, quick, Kate, for our excitement and curiosity are intense."

"Turn your faces away," said Kate, laughing, "until I have placed it in a good light."

So the girls looked toward the street, until bidden to look at the picture; then they turned about quickly, and beheld for the first time what Kate had been patiently working upon for weeks.

Hannah's eyes filled with tears as she gazed upon it, while she said, —

"It is so much better than I expected, dear, and it is so very natural and beautiful. I should never grow tired of gazing upon it."

"What do you think, Mary?" asked Kate.

"I think you are a true-born artist," answered Mary, giving Kate an affectionate squeeze.

"At first the teacher said it was too elaborate a design for a young artist like me; but I was so interested in it, and the picture was so indelibly stamped on my mind, it was not so very hard, though sometimes I grew disheartened, but only to feel better the next day; and now it is finished, and I am not sorry I attempted it."

"In the Orchard" being the title of one of the chapters in this story, the reader can easily imagine what was the design of the picture, — three young

girls sitting together on the old mossy ledge in the orchard, with the waving ferns at their feet, and the autumn glory all around them. Their hats were thrown aside, and the breeze had blown their hair into little curls and waves; and all seemed deep in thought. The eyes of one were fixed on the distant rim of the ocean, which the sunset crowned with gold and silver; while the others looked down at the ferns with a less dreamy expression; and all clasped hands, which was an emblem of their affection and constancy.

"There is nothing lacking in the picture, except 'Nijah," said Mary, after they had all gazed upon it some moments in silence.

"I wanted to paint him just as we saw him last with the gray squirrels; but I dared not attempt it; and now do you think any one will be pleased with it besides ourselves?"

"I don't know," said Hannah. "I haven't much confidence in my own opinions of late; but really I can't see how it can fail to get admiration."

"I will try it at least," said Kate, "and see what will become of it."

A few days after this, when the picture was varnished, and thought to be as near perfection as it could be made, Kate sought one of the galleries on Broadway, where she had spent many hours in gazing upon the pictures there; and asked the dealer to allow her to leave her design there for sale; but he would not even look at it.

"There is no use," he said. "I have not the least shadow of a place to hang it in; and though I am sorry to disappoint you, I cannot take it. If you had come in yesterday morning, I would have looked at it."

So Kate went out, her hope decreased to a consider-

able extent, but her perseverance as strong as ever. She sought another gallery; but the dealer only glanced at the picture.

"No room," he said; and she was about to turn away, when he said kindly, "If you are anxious to sell the picture, take it down to the auction room, and it may find a purchaser there."

"Just what I will do," said Kate to herself, as she left the gallery.

At the auction room she left her picture, hung in an obscure corner, where she said to herself no one would ever notice it; and half tempted to cry, she went out into the street, thinking every step she took that she would go back and get it, and not try to have it sold; but she didn't go back, and when she arrived home, she had given up all hope of selling the picture, even if she left it in that obscure place a month.

Christmas drew nearer and nearer, and Hannah wrote faster and faster; and at last her story was finished, all in good time, and rejoiced over and pronounced charming, as usual.

"The day before Christmas," she should receive an answer concerning its rejection or acceptation, the publisher, Solon Drew, said; and that would be time enough to get the Christmas dinner, Hannah thought, and went home well satisfied, especially as the publisher had said, as she was about leaving him, —

"There will be no doubt about its being accepted. Your other story was very good, and I have no doubt about this one; but then we must read it, you know."

"We must have just a little Christmas dinner," said Mary, when Hannah had told of her good luck, "because, you know, it will be so lonesome here, and we shall be so homesick."

"Of course we must," said Kate. "Christmas is always such a glorious time at home, and it will be so different here. So we must try to make it just a little pleasant you know."

"We shall miss making and receiving presents," said Hannah; "but we can write a long letter to father and mother; and I'm sure no present would suit them better."

"Well, I don't see but our circumstances just now look quite favorable," said Mary; and they all grew merry, and the hours sped on.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

"For one, I am tired of living in this way," said Mary, drawing nearer to the little stove, and shivering slightly. "I never shall be anything, for what can I learn with only a few hours a day to practice, and with a teacher who has a large class and no particular interest in it? I feel to-night just like going home to the country and settling down" —

"As the wife of Maurice Pike," put in Kate, with a roguish twinkle in her eye.

"I don't feel like being teased; everything has gone wrong to-day. My scholars were unusually dull; and when I undertook to sing in the class, my voice cracked and I choked, and then those ill-mannered girls all giggled. I'd like to know what I came to New York for? I'm sure I was comfortable at home. I never had to put myself on an allowance about eating, nor be all the time in a tremor about rent's coming due. People make themselves a great deal of trouble for nothing. Why didn't we stay at home, and be contented?"

"Because it isn't in us, I suppose. I'm sure I'm in a tight place just now; and it would seem nice to be at home, where we could go to sleep, as we used to, with no cares on our minds. I shall have to content myself with only a few dry crackers for my supper; and only

think, it is the night before Christmas. There is one comfort; they at home don't know our hardships."

"Yes, that is what I keep thinking; but Hannah is coming. Let us light the lamp. It is not really dark yet; but the weather is so dismal, a light may make the room seem a little more cheerful."

The door opened, and Hannah entered.

"How do you feel to-night?" inquired Mary. "I know you haven't had good luck by the looks of your eyes. Why, how wet your cloak is!"

"Sit down by the fire as soon as possible," said Kate, "and dry your feet. I'll hang up your cloak."

"It's wretchedly stormy," said Hannah; "and I walked all the way home from Fulton Street; and the wind blew directly in my face. I nearly froze my fingers too, for I forgot my mittens."

"It's too bad," said Mary; "let me unbutton your boots; and you shall wear my slippers; here they are, all ready."

"Thank you," said Hannah. "It's nice to have even this little uncarpeted room all to ourselves, this bitter cold night. I'm sure I am glad enough to get here. How have you progressed on your picture, Kate? and, Mamie, have you found any time to practice?"

"My picture would get along well enough if I could work on it every day as I have to-day; but I can't, you know."

"I haven't practiced but one hour," said Mary, "and that seemed to be on wings. Do tell us, Hannah, what luck you have had. I couldn't really gain courage to ask you, for I knew by your looks you hadn't been successful."

"Not so unsuccessful as I might have been," said

Hannah. "The story is accepted, but the pay doesn't come till it is published, which will be in a few weeks."

"Why *couldn't* Mr. Drew have known how much we want a Christmas dinner?" said Kate.

"Because people in general attend only to their own wants," said Hannah. "I thought at first I would tell him how much we needed the money; but somehow I couldn't do it. I thought about the difference in people's circumstances to-night as I walked up from Fulton Street in the storm, because I could not afford to ride, when it would have cost but six cents, while so many were leaning back in the cushions of close carriages."

"Yes," said Kate, "and go home to find nice suppers awaiting them. O dear, how I wish I was a man!"

"If constant wishing ever brought anything about," said Mary, "you would have been a man long ago."

"Well, only think what advantages men have, — Mr. St. Maur, for instance. How important and" —

"I saw him to-night," said Hannah, looking steadily into the fire, and speaking slowly.

"You saw him?" exclaimed Kate and Mary together. "Why didn't you tell us before? You are in a strange mood, Hannah. Did you speak with him?"

"No, he didn't see me, but was giving his attention to a ragged urchin, who got hurt in the street. The last I saw of him, he had the poor boy in his arms, bearing him away. O girls, there never was such a handsome man before, I am sure; and undoubtedly he is much more of a saint than we thought him. I begin to think the little widow was right. I believe men are more splendid than women."

"All because they have so many more advantages," said Kate. "I see you are charmed with Mr. St. Maur, Hannah."

"And so would you be, had you seen him lift that ragged boy so tenderly in his strong arms, and his eyes — I caught one glance — were as tender and soft as Mary's are now. He isn't a bear, Kate; we were wrong."

"And I am glad of it; but if he is not a bear, I'm sure he is a mystery," said Kate. "O, if I were a man, I could endure anything."

"But men have many temptations; and how few young men there are who are honest and true!"

"Don't girls have temptations as well?" said Kate quickly. "O dear, I believe the city is no place for a girl; and if I didn't want to be an artist so very, *very* much, and have the advantages for learning art which the country cannot give me, wouldn't I go home to my quiet little home nest and be at peace? Why were we not born contented to be common people, to marry some good farmers, — we have all had chances enough, — and settle down to domestic comfort, to wash dishes and mend clothes, free from those aspirations that haunt us, and drive us into hardships and disappointments? Think of Sally; I suppose she is perfectly happy and contented. And Annie Dame, she has nothing to fret about. She gets up in the morning and goes through a regular routine of domestic duties. I can see her now in the warm sitting-room with her mother, perhaps at work on patch-work, or knitting on a coarse blue sock for her father."

"Don't, Kate, bring up so pleasant a picture to distract us to-night," said Mary. "I can see just how it looks in that warm room. The white kitten is lying

on the rug all curled up; and Annie looks as placid as a June sky, and has nothing to worry about, — nothing worth worrying about I mean. She is sure of a good warm breakfast in the morning; and there is no unpaid rent to worry over."

"And more than all that," said Hannah, "there is not in her heart that unsatisfied longing to be something, to rise, and to learn everything. She is content to be comfortable, expecting of course to marry some time, and have a house of her own to keep."

"Why couldn't we have stayed at home and been the same?" said Mary. "Think how merry we might have been this winter, going to singing-schools, spelling-schools, parties, and evening meetings, just as the other girls do in the neighborhood. Don't the fried ham and eggs and apple-sauce at home seem good?"

"Yes, and mother's nice bread and golden butter," suggested Kate.

"And brown bread, corned beef and cabbage, pickles and doughnuts. O dear, I feel as if I could eat a bushel of the good things mother cooks," said Mary.

"Don't, girls, you'll drive me crazy," said Hannah. "Just hear the wind blow, and then that everlasting clatter, clatter in the streets. It deafens me. How quiet it must be at home to-night! Do you remember how we used to hang our stockings on the old chimney, and find them stuffed full in the morning?"

"I remember," said Mary, brushing from her eye a little round tear; "and I am tired of working, and working, and learning so little. It must be so pleasant at home now; and how dismal it is here."

"Always darkest just before day," said Hannah, trying to be lively; "and, after all, what is the use of

this talk? You know not one of us is sorry we have done just as we have; and we wouldn't be in Annie Dame's place for the world. We had rather struggle, live on crackers, and endure many hardships, than settle down to an unaspiring life."

"That is all true enough," said Mary, "but isn't it a misfortune to be born with such unsatisfied ambition! Of course we know very well that we were not satisfied to remain at home, and never would have been, to do no more than most girls; but why couldn't we have been?"

"You have asked an unanswerable question, Mary," said Kate. "You might as well have asked why the world was made."

"We must accept it as a fact," said Hannah, "that a quiet life with few hardships, and no achievements of mark, would not satisfy us; and probably this very discontent will cause us to prosper, for we shouldn't be likely to be determined to do something we never could do; and if we were sure we should in the future accomplish our objects, we shouldn't fret about being ambitious and aspiring. It is the fear that we can never be what we wish to be, that gives us the 'blues,' makes us discouraged, and causes us to long for the quiet, unassuming life of Annie Dame; and if we were satisfied, we should not rise higher. There is Miss Brechandon's step, and I am glad she is coming."

"All huddled together as usual," said Miss Brechandon, entering the room. "I thought I'd drop in for a moment, as it's the night before Christmas. To-morrow'll be a great day with the Catholics. David De Witt is down at the church practicing on the organ like one possessed."

"There is no day in the year equal to Christmas with us," said Hannah.

"Why didn't you go home, then, and not stay in this dismal hole?"

"O, we couldn't well do that," said Kate. "It costs more than we can afford."

"What girls! I never saw your like before, and I often wonder what will become of you; but girls, you know, never succeed."

"Never? Why, Miss Brechandon, you really do not mean that," said Hannah, in a tone of surprise.

"Seldom, I will say then, if that suits you better. I thought once there might be such a thing; but I have no more faith. You seem to be in earnest, but you must fail to be anything more than women, with women's hearts; and undoubtedly you'll spend your strength in vain."

"If it is spent in vain, it will be in earnest," said Kate; "but why should we fail, Miss Brechandon?"

"Because it's not women's place to be more than old maids, wives, and mothers."

"But women have been successful," said Hannah.

"Seldom," said Miss Brechandon, shaking her head. "I had high hopes once, but I see they were founded on imagination."

"Tell us about it," said Mary, who was always ready to hear a story.

"It is a painful story," said Miss Brechandon, "and I have never related it; but it is stormy and dismal to-night, and the twelfth anniversary of that dreadful day she left me, and it may do you good."

She drew nearer the little stove, and the girls gathered around her. She sat silent a moment, looking at the bright coals, then she commenced.

"It was thirty years ago, just thirty last night," she said musingly, "that I sat with my old aunt before the blazing fire in the old-fashioned kitchen, knitting away on a pair of mittens for a Christmas present to poor old Sammy Wilcox. I was sixteen then; how strange it seems! Only sixteen, and I hoped for great things in the future. My old aunt was nodding in her chair, and I was thinking and knitting together, when suddenly there came such a ring from the old brass knocker as I hadn't heard for many a day. I sprang up, and actually ran to the door, impressed that something terrible had happened. I unbarred and unlocked the door, and saw a man with a bundle in his arms standing on the step below. I thought him a stranger at first; but just then the moon, which had been hidden behind a cloud, shone out, and revealed to me my second cousin Joseph Graf. 'I have brought little Annie,' he said, as he followed me into the room. 'Her father is dead, and wished her brought here.' Little Annie was my poor dead sister's baby, only a year and a half old, a rosy, plump little thing; and I took her in my arms and hugged her close to my bosom. 'She shall be mine,' I said; and after that I devoted myself to the child, and made her my idol. My old aunt died soon after, and little Annie and I lived all alone in the great farm-house; and everything a mother could do for a child, I did for her."

Miss Brechandon stopped here, and for a little time was silent. She seemed to have forgotten she was not alone; but, suddenly recollecting herself, she continued: —

"Little Annie was the brightest and smartest scholar in every school which she attended, and everybody prophesied for her a glorious future, and I felt sure she

would make her mark in the world. I was not able to educate her, as I desired" — here Miss Brechandon ceased speaking, and began rocking backwards and forwards rapidly.

The girls were silent a moment, looking at her in astonishment; then Mary touched her cheek gently.

"Please tell the rest, Miss Brechandon," she said; but Miss Brechandon shook her head.

"I can't tell the rest," she said. "I thought I would when I commenced, but *he* wouldn't like it; and I can only tell you that 'just one ball' was the ruin of her; and just twelve years ago to-night she kissed me many times before she went out, just for a few moments she said; but she never came back again. She had every advantage to be more than an ordinary woman; but she preferred to run away with a senseless fop than remain at home and have all the good things ever a woman enjoyed. That was twelve years ago, and only once since have I seen her. She was in the street; how she looked, as pale as a ghost," — Miss Brechandon shuddered, — "and dressed in threadbare garments. She called to me, but I passed on. She had chosen her way, and must walk in it. I haven't seen her since; and where she is, I never expect to know."

She had but just ceased speaking, when Hannah, filled with sympathy for the poor little Annie, exclaimed excitedly, —

"It is no wonder, Miss Brechandon, that you believe God to be so full of wrath and vengeance, if you turned away from the pleading face of one who had erred, but who called to you again probably for forgiveness. It is not strange you so thoroughly believe in your stern and stiff religion. I have often before

wondered why you, with the tender heart I believed you possessed, could believe our Heavenly Father to be so cruel; but I understand now, and shall never wonder again. Perhaps we judge God by ourselves, and do not know it. If we are uncharitable and suspicious, if we think there are only a few worthy to be saved, perhaps we believe God judges the same way."

Miss Brechandon stared at Hannah as if hardly comprehending her meaning.

"But it wasn't I," she said after a moment, "who brought the trouble upon her, but she who brought it upon herself, and upon me and *him*."

"But haven't you enough charity in your heart to understand wherefore she might have been tempted to err, and then repent? And how can you be happy since you met her in the street, and turned away from her? Doesn't her pleading voice haunt you continually? Ah! Miss Brechandon, for what purpose do you think religion was instituted? It isn't of the ministers after all, that we learn what is the true religion; one loving, forgiving act is a more powerful sermon than a most profound theological dissertation, and one unforgiving and unloving deed, committed and unretracted, cannot be covered by countless sermons and seeming piety."

Miss Brechandon looked stiffly into the fire, and did not speak.

"Dear Miss Brechandon," said Mary, who was the favorite, "how will God forgive your sins if you do not forgive poor little Annie her sins?" Still she did not speak.

"I don't want the religion," said Kate, "that hardens my heart toward a poor erring sister. The creed

of a religion sinks into insignificance by the side of charitable deeds and loving kindness; and a true, warm, forgiving heart will surely find favor in the sight of God, whether the person is Protestant or Catholic, orthodox or otherwise."

Miss Brechandon looked up at the three earnest faces around her.

"If one of you three should ruin the happiness of the others, would you forgive and embrace her as you do now?" she asked. The three sisters drew nearer together, and silently clasped hands.

"What is love and friendship worth," said Hannah earnestly, "if it only lives while the object is in prosperity? If we should cast off our friends because they err, we should retain but few."

"But *he* was the noblest man that ever lived," said Miss Brechandon in measured tones, as if to herself, "and he can't forgive, or at least he thinks she merits all the sorrow she has found."

She arose and looked at the girls a moment as they were nestled closely together in the dim lamp-light; then she turned abruptly and opened the door in the hall. "Good night," she said, and, walking out, closed the door after her.

"There is nothing in life that could part us, dears," said Hannah, drawing the girls nearer to her.

"Nothing," answered both; and the storm raged on, and the clatter continued in the streets.

"We'll not hang up our stockings to-night," said Kate; "but I have got a present for us all, just something to look at."

"And I have got something for you to listen to," said Mary.

"And I have made a Christmas poem to read to

you," said Hannah; "and who knows but our Christmas will be delightful?"

"I shall go to see little Neil Blossom, and sing him my new song; and I shall tell his poor mother not a cent shall I charge for the last six weeks of his lessons, for she really isn't able to pay it, and I am afraid is working herself into the grave. Of course we need the money; but I'm sure she needs it more, now her poor boy is sick."

"It is noble in you, Mary," said Kate, "and I am sure we shall lose nothing by considering others. I am sorry my picture didn't sell; but I shall take it away after Christmas. It never will be noticed there, with no frame, and in that obscure corner."

"How pleasant it is," said Hannah musingly, "to be together, we three! why should we complain, while we have each other, and a dear beautiful home in the country to which we can fly at any time, should sickness or misfortune come upon us? How many there are in the city with no one to love them or comfort them, and no dear home to think about as all ready to receive them!"

"Poor things!" sighed Kate, "how I wish I could comfort and bless them all! and after all, girls, what is there in this life so beautiful as helping each other and doing our duties faithfully? Wealth and fame are as dross in comparison."

"I am sure of it," answered Hannah, "and let it be our aim and object to make ourselves, and those around us, better. Let us strive and not get selfish, but keep our hearts full of charity and love; then we shall have something that will never fail us; and we can bear prosperity and adversity, and see good in both."

"I feel so much better than I did," said Mary, "and

I think we shall sleep sweetly and enjoy our Christmas with the best."

With these consoling words and comforting thoughts, the three young girls retired, determined to make the best of all that should happen to them, but not once dreaming of the pleasure which the morning was destined to bring; and while they slept, the snow grew deeper in the streets, and Christmas grew nearer and nearer.

## CHAPTER XV.

### CHRISTMAS DAY.

THE girls were still sleeping sweetly and soundly, when a heavy pounding on the door awakened them; and they started up, and looked at each other bewilderingly.

"What can it mean?" said Hannah, rubbing her eyes.

"It's I," said Miss Brechandon's voice impatiently. "You'd better not lie in bed any longer; there's a gentleman in the hall who wants to see you; and I should say he has taken an early start."

"Mercy!" exclaimed Kate, giving her black hair a toss back from her face. "A gentleman caller at this hour! We don't know any one but Mr. St. Maur, and it can't be he. How does he look?" she inquired in a loud voice of Miss Brechandon.

"Tall and green," answered Miss Brechandon bluntly.

"Did he wear a fur cap?" asked Mary.

"I should say he did, but still I don't know certain; but don't ask me any more questions; just get ready and go down. He broke in upon my morning devotions, and I don't want to have any more trouble with him;" and the girls heard her steps retreating.

"Now, girls, don't yawn and gape, but be quick. Remember it is Christmas morning; and who knows

but something good is in store for us. Last night, you know, we were almost despairing, though not so much so as to call to our presence the 'Genius of Despair and Suicide' that once sat at the fire of the Baron of Grogzwig. I dreamed of him, though, last night, and thought he came into our little room here, and Kate drove him out with a pair of brass-handled tongs; and he fled so precipitately that one of the coffin handles that ornamented his tunic fell off, and Mary caught it up and flung it at his head; and then we all laughed so loud that I awoke."

They laughed and shivered, and hurried about with their teeth chattering with the cold and the excitement.

"Who *can* it be?" asked Mary. "Shall we all go down together?"

"Of course," said Hannah, braiding her hair with chilled fingers. "Miss Brechandon said he wanted to see *us;* and who are us, but all three? If it *should* be Mr. St. Maur! but it can't be, only I can't think of any one else."

In a short time their toilets were made; and throwing their shawls around them, they left their room, and went down the stairs to the lower hall. At the farther end, leaning against the door, they saw a tall man; but there was too little light to tell them who he was, even if they had seen him before. They advanced hesitatingly; but he approached them with rapid strides; and Kate, with a little spring forward, exclaimed, "'Nijah! can it be! yes, girls, as sure as you live, it is 'Nijah himself;" and never before did the bashful young man receive such a hearty welcome; and his good-natured face glowed all over with rapture.

"I should a known you anywheres," he said when the girls gave him time to speak.

"Of course you would," said Mary, who still continued to squeeze his great brown hand with both her own. "I'm afraid, however, this is a dream, 'Nijah, because I can't conceive of anything that would bring you to New York."

'Nijah was about to break forth in one of his loud laughs; but a step and the sound of a door opening and shutting prevented it; and he gave a most unnatural sneeze and forced cough.

"How is everybody at home? have you seen father and mother? did they know you were coming? If it is a dream, answer these questions before we awake," said Hannah eagerly.

"Everybody's all right to home, I b'lieve, 'cept old Dan Pike: he's dead and buried yesterday forenoon; kind of a fit he had, and died sudden. Your folks was the last folks I see in our neighborhood; and they sent so many words, blamed if I can remember half on 'em; but they're all well, and sent you some things."

"'Nijah, what *did* you come to New York for? I must know that, before I know another thing. Did you come to see the city, or what?" asked Mary, with a serious air.

"It's kind of a story, you see," said he, looking around him in a hesitating way, as though everything wasn't just right for telling a story.

"Dear, dear!" whispered Hannah to Kate, "what shall we do? We can't stand in the hall much longer. I'm nearly frozen; besides, people will begin to pass through here soon."

"If our room was only in order," whispered Kate in return, "I wouldn't mind taking him up there, would you?"

"No, not a bit; and I'll go up and have every-

thing all ready in a few moments; and then we can talk without fear of interruption;" and away went Hannah, while the girls explained the cause of her leaving them. It wasn't long before she beckoned to them from the top of the stairs, and 'Nijah followed the girls to their room. "Now," said Kate, turning about just as they were going to enter the little room, — "now, 'Nijah, remember you are not to tell a word about our household affairs."

"I won't tell nothing you don't want me to," said 'Nijah; and they passed in. There was a very strange stare on the young man's face as he looked about him, and saw the little white beds, the upright piano, and the limited space to walk around in; and he stood silent a moment, and gazed at one thing and then at another.

"Then this is how you've done it," he said at last. "Everybody to home, you know, is a sayin', 'Jacob Windsor must have a mine of money I don't know on to send three gals like his'n to school in New York city all winter long; or else he's a spendin' every cent he's wo'th to do it;' and I must say *I* wondered over it. I see just how 'tis now; and I'd like to give Malidy Frow a sly hint, for she's always sayin', 'There, I guess I could be somethin' if I had a chance;' but, gracious, she don't know how chances come."

"You are not to say a word about it, you know, 'Nijah," said Hannah, motioning him to a little seat at the stove.

"No, you just set there; *I* shan't," said he; "I'm not a bit cold, and I know you be." He looked very awkward and out of place in that little room, and seemed also to feel stiff and uncomfortable in his new suit of clothes and paper collar.

"We are so glad to see you," said Kate, when at last they were all seated near the fire; "and now you must tell us every bit of the news, first explaining why you are in New York this Christmas morning."

"Goodness me, how Sally did fume and fret about it at first! but then pa, you know he's kind of easy, and I got along all right. I'll begin at the beginnin', and tell the hull story just how it all come about.

"In the first place, when you'd gone, the neighborhood didn't seem like the same place. Everything was dull; and nobody didn't seem to try to do anything but plod, plod, plod in one track; and so I got to thinkin'; and when I'd thought a spell, I got ashamed of myself. 'What!' I thought, 'shall three pretty girls, with little white hands and hearts tender as chickens, go off and make their fortunes, and I, a great man six foot tall, with these stout hands, stay on a rocky old farm forever, and do the same things over and over, and get to be some old codger at last?' But what could I do? that was the pint; and blamed if I could think of a single thing. I didn't tell nobody what I thought, but Dill; and she couldn't think of nothin' neither; and I was in the worst kind of a fix, for you see I got as uneasy as a fish out of water; and pa, he got discouraged of me; and there I was. All to once one Sunday mornin', when I was thinkin' the same thing over, I got an idea; and as quick as that come into my mind, I felt like another bein'. I was bound, you see, to go away from home, for I knew that was what I needed; and I thought New York would be the very best place I could go to; and my idee was that I'd earn enough money to go there; and you better believe the next day I went to work with a will. Pa actually gazed at me in surprise, and Sally said she

was glad to see me act sensible agin; but they didn't know, you see, what was in my head. I told Dill 'bout it, and she cried, poor little thing, and said everybody was goin' off, and what was the use of living? but I told her I'd come back soon, and be enough better to pay; and she kind of got reconciled. I 'ranged it with pa so I made some money of my own, though it didn't come very fast; and all the time I kept a thinkin' and thinkin'. Just about a month ago it was when Dill came along by the field where I was to work, and beckoned me out to the path. She asked me the first thing how I would like to learn a carpenter's trade. I jest told her I'd like to boss great meetin'-houses, for I'd no idee what she was drivin' at; and then she said her uncle William had come from New York, and he was a carpenter, and would like an apprentice. How I did jump about then! and Dill she actually langhed, though she was half crying; and that, you see, is just why I'm here. I made a bargain with her uncle William to come after Christmas; but I come one day earlier, so I could see you and the city before I went to work."

"And you are going to stay here in the city, and work?" said Mary, as if hardly comprehending the story.

"That's it; but I know I'm tremenjous green, and I've concluded, you see, to keep cool, till I've learnt something." Here he looked at Kate with a very red face, and thrust his hands into his pockets. "Boys don't learn so fast as girls anyhow," he continued; "and the dickens! they feel so awkward, they can't get 'round no ways decent. It may be all owin' to their big hands and feet, and long legs and arms; blamed if I know what to do with mine half the time."

"You'll soon learn," said Hannah. "How do you like the city?"

"Wal, 'tain't nothin's I thought 'twas. Everything's all jined together; so, you see, a feller can't tell what's what."

"So old Dan Pike is dead?" said Mary, who was thinking about home.

"Yes, and Maurice'll have the farm now. He's a strange chap. When you went away, he bet that you'd be home agin in less than a month."

"It's strange we heard nothing of your coming to New York," said Kate.

"No, 'tisn't; for many didn't know of it, and *they* promised not to tell. I wanted to surprise you; but you won't take no offense, I'm sure, when I tell you I'm surprised to find you in this little room up so high. Not but what it's comfortable, but it's so small. Couldn't do much at dancing here. Where'n the diggins do you eat?"

"On this table," laughed Hannah.

"Do you really, now? But where do you get your victuals? Of course you don't cook in here."

"Yes, we do too," said Kate, "if we cook at all;" and then she nudged Hannah, and whispered, "What shall we do about breakfast? Of course 'Nijah hasn't had any. Probably he came directly from the boat."

"You are a-talkin' 'bout breakfast, but I've eat, and I'm in your way about getting yourn; besides, I shouldn't wonder if there was somethin' good to eat in that sachel. I was in to your house the day before I came away, and I was agoin' to say I smelt a rat, but I didn't; I smelt somethin' nice a cookin', and your ma had flour on her apron, and was beatin' eggs, and there was raisins lyin' round loose; and I took the

hint, and asked no questions. Does she know what kind of a room you live in?"

"No, she doesn't of course: how could she? and you mustn't tell her, 'Nijah, because it would do no good, and we get along nicely," said Hannah anxiously.

"No danger of my tellin'; besides, you'll go home before I will, and there's no chance of your ma and I getting up a plan of writin' letters to each other."

"How long are you going to stay?" asked Kate.

"O, a long time, perhaps years. I don't think I shall get a bit homesick," said 'Nijah in a confident tone.

"I hope you won't," said Mary, sympathetically. "You haven't told us where you will stay."

"All I know 'bout it," said 'Nijah, with a grin, "is what there is on a piece of paper in my pocket. One place is the same to me as another in this confusion. Mr. Lake writ it down for me, and told me to inquire."

Here he produced from the depth of his pocket a card, and passed it to the girls.

"O it's not far from here, 'Nijah," said Hannah; "is it with Mr. Lake you will board?"

"Yes, right with him, and he is jist the cleverest man you ever see. I want you to come there some day. Now say you will."

"Perhaps," said Kate; "have you been there yet?"

"No, and blamed if I don't dread goin'. It's hard on a feller now, ain't it, to go amongst strangers?" and 'Nijah rested one heavy boot on his knee, and sat uneasily in his chair. "I told Mr. Lake I must come here first anyhow, and he came to the very door with

me, and told me not to stay long, for breakfast would be ready; but I had a doughnut and some cheese in my pocket, that Sally gave me, and I eat that, and don't feel hungry. Howsomever, I must go, and give you a chance to eat your breakfasts, and see what your ma sent you; for it's jist like you not to look till I'm gone, if I stay all day;" and 'Nijah began to arise from the little low chair in which he was sitting. He rose up six feet, shook down his satinet pants, and looked at the girls hesitatingly.

"We would like to see what mother has sent," said Hannah, frankly; "but we haven't seen you half enough yet, 'Nijah, and we are so glad you have come."

"Yes, indeed we are," said Kate; "for there are hundreds more questions we want to ask you; and if you'll only come in again, and if you would like, sometime in the day we'll go around the city with you, though of course it won't be so lively as though it weren't Christmas."

"Just exactly what I wanted to ask of you," said 'Nijah, a bland smile breaking over his face; "but I dassent hardly, for I didn't know as you'd want to go round with such a green chap; and gracious, I didn't blame you; and I mean to learn, you know: anybody with brains can learn, can't he?"

"With brains and heart, yes," said Hannah; "but don't learn to be less good and true than you are now, 'Nijah."

The young rustic's face grew very red, and he looked at Kate in that quick, anxious way he often had before.

"Yes, 'Nijah, they say the city is a bad place for young men, and most of them get ruined. It don't

pay to gain knowledge of the ways and manners of the world, and lose virtue and goodness. Better be rough and green, as you call yourself, and true, than polished and fine and false."

'Nijah was whirling his hat rapidly about, poised on one finger; but when he looked up to reply, there was a pure, honest look in his eyes, and a slight quiver on his lip.

"I mean to resist all evil temptations," he said earnestly; "and if I can't be a gentleman without being a rowdy, I'll be nobody but Adonijah. And if I can only see you sometimes," — here he glanced particularly at Kate, — "it'll encourage me so. You've got jest that faculty. It seems as if you understand a feller."

"We know you are a good, dear boy," said Mary, who was growing hungry and impatient to look into the sachel; "and we shall want you to come and see us ever so often;" and she gave the fire a little poke.

"I won't hender you no longer; and shall I come after dinner?"

"Yes, just after dinner," said Hannah; and she and Kate went with him to the stairs, and when he had gone, ran back to their room to find Mary opening the sachel.

"I couldn't wait," she said; "not only curiosity, but hunger, has overpowered me."

The satchel was full of nice things, which a mother's hands had prepared; and there was a little note, which the girls read eagerly. Here is an extract: —

"I shall miss you on Christmas; but I shall not mind that, if only you are comfortable and well, and think it best to stay, as you do. We send you five dollars, and would send more; but you know our

expenses have increased since poor Ruth and her children came home, and money is scarce. I shall be glad when spring comes, and you can be home again. I can imagine how glad you will be to see 'Nijah, and I hope he will do well in the city. You must not forget him; but do him all the good you can."

"So we will," said Kate. "What unthought of things happen! 'Nijah is the last one I expected to see in New York city."

"Haven't things taken a good turn?" said Mary, while they were eating their breakfast. "'Nijah always was our champion, and I'm really so glad he has come; and his awkward ways actually do me good. I wouldn't be ashamed of him, would you?"

"I am proud of him," said Hannah. "There are not many boys in this city equal to him in real worth."

"I wonder what Mr. De Witt would think of him," said Mary. "I suppose we shan't see him to-day. I must go to see little Neil Blossom this morning; there'll be no time in the afternoon."

"I shall unveil my picture after breakfast. You can see it's very small, but then I thought it would please us all a little."

"You thought right," said Mary; "and after we see it, I will sing my little new song; the poetry is some that Hannah made long ago; but it is pretty for all that."

"You excite my curiosity," said Hannah; "but after you have sung, I shall read my poem, which of course isn't elegant at all; for somehow the poetical fever has about vanished, and this is very simple."

"That will suit us," said Kate, "for we are simple girls; there never could be anything elegant made out

of us. We have played in the open air too much, and run about the free country too much to have any of the precise about us; and I don't believe we shall ever be real old maids, even if we never marry."

"Not if we keep busy, and do our duties faithfully, and keep our hearts young and warm. Selfish brooding and isolation make women old-maidish and taciturn, and I shall try and be a model old maid. The world needs one."

After breakfast was over, and all things in good order, the little painting was displayed, admired, and praised, Mary's pretty song heard and appreciated, and Hannah's poem listened to with closest attention; then Mary, having with her sister's help put into a little basket a few of the nice eatables sent them from home, started with them to call on her sick pupil. She met Mr. De Witt at the foot of the steps in the street.

"A merry Christmas to you," he said, in such a brisk, lively tone that Mary wondered what had happened.

"Thank you," she replied, "I hope you will have many; how snowy and cold it is!"

"Yes, so it is; and where can you be going all alone with a little basket on your arm?"

"To see a scholar of mine, who is ill."

"Can I go with you?"

"I would be glad of your company, but they might not like to see a stranger."

"Very true, I'll see you again to-day. Miss Mary, there is something I wish to say to you;" and, saying this, he ran lightly up the steps.

"I wonder what it is," thought Mary, as she walked on against the wind. "If only he wasn't a Catholic. What a misfortune! He has such splendid eyes, and

is such a gentleman, and he is good too, — as good as ever a Protestant was in the world; but he would seem so different if only he wasn't a Catholic."

So busily did she think on this same subject, the journey seemed very short; and before she hardly knew it, she was mounting the stairs that led to the humble home of little Neil Blossom and his mother, who greeted her with looks and words of welcome. Neil was a little better, and listened delightedly to the new song Mary sung to him, while Mrs. Blossom wiped her eyes silently.

"It is very sweet," she said, when Mary had finished. "It reminds me so much of my childhood;" but this was all she would say, and Mary made no inquiries, but started for home with very pleasant feelings in her heart. She had made two hearts happier, and given in her mite toward relieving the poor; and what joys does this world give in which there is more satisfaction?

'Nijah came after dinner as was expected; and though he saw Miss Brechandon in the hall, he passed on up the stairs without making any inquiries, and, without making one mistake, knocked on the door of the girls' room.

Hannah opened it.

"O, it's you, 'Nijah," she said; "come in; we were just talking about you."

He had only just taken his seat when he commenced fumbling in his pockets.

"O, here they be, confound it all," he said at last, drawing out a stiff-looking package. "I didn't know but some of them fellers had picked my pocket. I've brought you some Christmas presents. They ain't much, of course; but I thought you didn't have many

trinkets, and these was cheap, so I bought 'em;" and he proceeded to open the package, and soon displayed, to the girls' astonishment, three sets of cheap jewelry, pins and ear-rings. Mary actually choked in trying to keep from laughing; and for a moment no one spoke.

As if suddenly struck with a new idea, 'Nijah looked quickly at the girls' ears, and then his face began to flame as usual.

"You don't wear rings in your ears," he said. "What a dunce I was to think you did! but can't you wear them? Sally does. Ain't there no holes in your ears?"

"Not a hole," said Kate, bursting out into laughter. "It's all right, 'Nijah; the pins are pretty, but we consider our ears better off just as they are. They feel comfortable, you know, and we have something to do besides piercing them and distressing ourselves."

"Blamed if I ever thought of that before," said 'Nijah. "Ear-rings certain ain't no kind of use; besides, I don't like the looks on 'em; they always make me shudder, ever since Sally got her ear torn out so; but I thought girls must have 'em. Sally said she couldn't get along nohow without 'em."

"Well, we can very easily," said Hannah; "but we thank you just the same for your kindness as though we wore them. We will keep them to remember you by."

'Nijah was satisfied, and answered all the girls' questions with patience and pleasure. With considerable satisfactory pride, the girls prepared to escort the young man around the city, and show him the sights; but as luck would have it, Mr. De Witt met them in the hall, and took Mary with him to attend church.

"He ain't a beau, is he?" asked 'Nijah, when they were in the street.

"No," answered Kate, with a disdainful toss of her head. "He's only a friend."

"All right," answered 'Nijah, and they all laughed; but Hannah and Kate were not quite pleased that Mary had left them.

To tell of the sight-seeing of this country lad, his wonder, ignorance, and astonishment, would be but repeating an old story; yet it was none the less interesting to them, and the three heartily enjoyed and appreciated their Christmas afternoon.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### HOPES AND FEARS.

"'*Joys* cluster; rare are solitary *joys*;
They love a train; they tread each other's heel.'

"THAT is what I should have written instead of *woes*, as Young did;" and saying this, Mary ran her fingers over the keys of the piano, bringing forth a lively waltz.

"Joys sometimes turn to grief," suggested Hannah, without raising her voice, and speaking more to Kate than to Mary.

"I've concluded that it's a better way to speak one's mind than keep silent," said Kate tartly, "and I mean to have the matter well understood in the beginning. There is no use in affecting simplicity and ignorance, and all that; and there is no use in trusting one's self to extremities."

"What do you mean?" demanded Mary, whirling around on the piano-stool, and looking at Kate with a flushed face.

"I mean just this," answered Kate, "that you are becoming too interested in Mr. De Witt, and you know it never will answer; and I say we are old enough to use judgment and forethought, and look into matters, and not sit down like three babies, until the thing goes so far it can't be mended."

"Pooh! what do I care for Mr. De Witt, only as a

nice gentleman and a good friend? I just wish you wouldn't mention him in that way. You just set me to thinking about it."

"Well, I say there is danger," said Kate; "and now, since he has offered to give you lessons, you will meet him continually; and I just want to warn you in season, and remind you that he is a Catholic."

"At least," said Hannah, glad the subject was introduced, "I don't think it is well for you to go with him again to church, or anywhere else; but of course it is nice to take lessons of him, for I'm sure that will be a great benefit to you."

"I'd like to know where the harm is?" said Mary, thumping on the low keys of the piano, and looking a little disheartened.

"Where is the harm in anything?" asked Kate. "Don't you see there is danger of one or the other or both of you becoming attached, or, to speak more plainly, falling in love?"

"No, I don't see anything of the kind; and I wish you wouldn't make me think about it," said Mary.

"What is the harm in thinking of a liability, and a most natural consequence?" suggested Hannah. "Mr. De Witt is a young gentleman, and you are a young lady; and it is just as necessary to think of such things as it is to think of anything else. Nothing is more natural than falling in love; and nothing is more important than to try and govern our affections."

"Well, but I think it looks silly to talk about love in this matter. I dare say Mr. De Witt would feel imposed upon if he should hear you."

"But we don't intend he shall hear us, and we don't intend to impose upon any one; but you know nothing pleases you so well as to hear of Mr. De Witt, and

you would talk of nothing else if we would listen," said Kate, who in reality was getting a little jealous.

"Of course I have to say something about him, since he is going to give me lessons on the organ; and I see him quite often," said Mary, her face growing redder. "He doesn't act at all like a beau. I don't even take his arm in the street."

"But he gave you that sentimental love-song; and I've heard it till it is really distasteful to me," said Hannah. "I do believe you would like to sing it all the time if you could. It's too bad if Mr. De Witt, a Catholic, breaks in upon our peace."

"I thought you professed to be charitable," said Mary; "and you have always told me Catholics are as good as anybody, if they behave as well."

"So is an Indian, or an African, or a Chinese as good as anybody; but I shouldn't want you to marry one of them. Catholics should marry Catholics, and then they will agree," said Kate.

"But I thought we believed in practical Christianity, and didn't care much about creeds and sects. Practical Christians can live peaceably together, whatever their theological belief, I thought."

"You didn't talk in that way once," said Kate, her eyes getting larger, and her voice more anxious. "You said at first you never would fall in love with a Catholic; and now here you are talking as if there would be no harm in it, trying all you can to vindicate it."

"Why, I've no notion of falling in love with Mr. De Witt, especially without any cause for it. I want nothing to do with love unrequited; and I wish you wouldn't talk about it; you set me to thinking, and spoil my comfort."

"Why need it spoil your comfort, if there is no danger and no liability of anything coming out of it but friendship? It has gone farther than I like already, and farther than we anticipated anything of the kind would be carried when we came to New York," said Hannah.

"You remember we decided to have nothing to do with young men," said Kate, "and dear me, don't let us set everybody saying, 'I told you so,' by getting interested in beaux. No wonder girls don't succeed any oftener, and no wonder Mr. St. Maur and Miss Brechandon have no faith in them. Do let us try and get through our education without getting entrapped in a love affair. What is the use in the sacrifices we have made and the struggles we have had, if we throw by everything and fall in love?"

"I'm not going to give up my object," said Mary; "don't you worry. I'm as anxious to succeed as you are; and Mr. De Witt will assist me instead of hindering me."

"Well, I suppose there is no use in talking," said Hannah; "but if you do get enamored of Mr. De Witt, it will spoil all of our fun, and break up our united ambition; besides, he is not the one for you at all, being a Catholic."

"How people do change with circumstances!" said Mary; "but I do wish you wouldn't say anything more about it; I don't like to hear it; and I must go now to take my lesson; he asked me to be prompt, for he don't like to stay away from his mother any longer than is necessary, as she is quite feeble."

"He is kind to his mother, and I honor him for that," said Hannah; "but do appear rather stiff, Mary, and don't get much acquainted. I think it will be better under the circumstances."

Who ever heeded such advice as this? What young lady ever failed to forget such advice when in the presence of an agreeeable young man?

Mary stood before the glass an unusual length of time, arranging her hair this way and that way, and tying and retying the bright blue ribbon at her pretty white throat; but she thought, as she walked through the street toward the room wherein was the organ, and Mr. De Witt awaiting her, of all that the girls had said, and determined to be rather cool and polite, as they suggested; though she declared to herself that it was all nonsense about falling in love, for she never should think of such a thing, and the girls were afraid without the least reason.

When she opened the door into the music room, she found Mr. De Witt playing; and he did not notice her entrance. But the music thrilled her through and through, so that she forgot all her resolutions and fears, and, when the young musician turned about, greeted him with looks and voice expressive of delightful emotions. Stiff ways and cool politeness were all forgotten, and for an instant they looked at each other as if their souls had been for a moment united by the delicious melody that seemed to be still dimly echoing through the room. It was a soft pathetic piece which he had been playing, so tender and touching that Mary's eyes swam in a liquid light, and she exclaimed, "O Mr. De Witt, if ever, *ever* I can play like that!"

"You liked the piece, then?" he said, pleased with her compliment.

"I more than liked it, I am in love with it," she said; "where did you get it?"

"It is my own composition," he explained modestly.

By this revelation, Mr. De Witt had unknowingly

invested himself with a potent charm for Mary, which no amount of personal fascinations, upon which many young men depend to win hearts, could have gained for him. He immediately received from her an increase of respect and reverence, which was only his just due; for as far as persons succeed in worthy objects, as far as they display merit through perseverance and accomplishment, and perform deeds noble or beautiful, — so far they are invested with dignity and merit, respect and appreciation.

And so it is that we often see persons of genius with few personal attractions flattered and worshipped, and not falsely.

Mary had not thought of Mr. De Witt as a composer, and she looked at the piece of music, which he had been playing, and to which his name was attached, with astonishment and pleasure.

"You did not tell me" — she said hesitatingly.

"I never thought that you didn't know it," he replied, smiling. "I meant to have presented you with a new piece of mine on Christmas, but I finished it too late for publication. Will you hear it?"

"O yes, do play it, if you will."

He turned to the organ again, and this time played a piece varied with joyful strains, and touches of pathos. When he had finished, he gave Mary his seat.

"Do you ever attempt composition?" he asked.

"O yes, I attempt it, but I have no one but my sisters to judge of my pieces, and they are too partial to be correct," answered Mary, blushing slightly.

"Some time shall I hear them?"

"If you will be so kind."

"If I can be so favored."

This was Mary's first lesson on the organ; and when

it was over, and she was in the street again, she walked thoughtfully on towards home.

"Mr. De Witt has genius, I am sure," she said to herself; "but I haven't, and I don't know as I ever thought I did; but I'll carry him that song the girls like so well when I go again, and see what he says of it. How grand and sweet his pieces are, and how masterful too! How little I thought him the man he is, the first time I saw him! I wish Hannah and Kate could hear him play; they never have."

So she thought on and on in the same strain, until she arrived at the foot of the steps, and some one gave her a little shake. She started, and, seeing it was Kate, blushed deeply.

"How you frightened me!" she said; "what is the matter? you look as though something delightful had happened."

"Do I? then I look just the truth. I have just come from the auction room, and my picture" —

"Is sold — for how much?" broke in Mary.

"Only for twelve dollars; but guess who bought it."

"I can't: who? tell quick."

"Mr. St. Maur."

"How do you know?"

"The proprietor told me, and I'm so glad I know where it is. Mr. St. Maur must have known it was mine; and if he didn't buy it for its merit, he must have bought it to benefit me; and in either case I am greatly obliged."

"How did you feel when you saw it was gone?"

"Excited, as much as anything. Don't times grow bright?"

"Didn't I tell you, '*Joys* cluster?'"

"They love a train," said Hannah's voice near them.

"Well, if we haven't all met at the foot of the ladder!" exclaimed Kate, laughing; "what news have you brought?"

"Mine is too good to tell in the street," said Hannah, in a lively tone; "and as for Kate's, I know hers already."

"You do? Have you been listening?"

"No; come up to our room, and I'll tell you all about it."

When in their little room, even before the door was closed after them, Kate exclaimed, "Tell me how you knew my picture was sold."

"Mr. St. Maur told me."

"Well, if that isn't exciting!" exclaimed Kate. "Where did you see him."

"At his office."

"Mercy! who knew he had an office before? and how came you there?"

"If you are any more surprised than I was, I don't think you'll survive it," said Hannah, drawing a long breath.

"Tell the story, do," said Mary. "Don't say so many unnecessary things."

"It's an elegant office on Broadway," said Hannah; "and I came upon it all of a sudden."

"But what business had you to go in, and why were you so surprised?" asked Kate.

"Why was I so surprised? because I couldn't help it. There was a notice outside, which said, 'Two good writers wanted to copy manuscript.' A good chance for Kate and I, thought I; and without looking once at the name or sign, I walked right in, and ad-

vanced toward the man who it seemed occupied the most prominent position. I hardly looked up until I was near him. Dear me, I feel faint to think of it actually;" and Hannah rolled her eyes around, and began to sink backwards.

"O, don't stop at such an interesting point. Tell the rest, do," said Mary.

Hannah commenced again.

"Well, I looked up, and there was — O mercy! everything swam before me, — there was Mr. St. Maur, looking as fierce as ever, with his heavy hair in confusion, and a look in his eyes that said, 'If you have any business with me, proceed at once;' but I was struck dumb with surprise and confusion; besides, I felt afraid of him for a moment."

"What *did* you do? no wonder you were surprised. I'm sure I should have swooned immediately," said Kate.

"My brain whirled, I am sure," said Hannah, "and I didn't know anything certain for a while, I don't know how long; and there that frightful man kept looking at me without any mercy. 'I didn't know *you* were here,' I said after several efforts to speak; 'and I came in to see if there was any chance for my sister and I to copy for you.' 'Which sister?' he asked. 'The artist,' said I.

"He drew from a drawer some manuscript, gave me a pen and some paper, and requested me to copy four lines. The first glance I had at the manuscript, my hopes forsook me for fear that I never could decipher it. I felt as if Mr. St. Maur's eyes were watching my every motion, and that was no assistance toward self-possession. The next glance at the chirography, however, more favorably impressed me, and I read and

copied the four lines as requested, though I fear not in a very short space of time. He gave it a short, but scrutinizing glance when I passed it to him, and then threw it one side, while I held my breath. 'You will do,' he said.

"For the first time I remembered then that I hadn't asked him a question about the pay or the hours for working. He seemed to divine my thoughts. 'I shall pay you so much a page,' he said, 'and you must come here to this office a few hours a day.' 'And my sister?' I inquired. 'I will employ if I find her competent,' he said. There was a painting at his elbow which it seemed had just been brought in, as the wrapping paper and twine were near by. I could only get a glance at it, and wrong side up too; but somehow I thought it looked familiar, and must have looked toward it sharply. He held it up an instant, and I saw it was yours, and couldn't resist asking him if he bought it; and he replied, 'Certainly,' and laid it down again, and I came away; and it does seem to me my feet didn't touch the pavement at all; but I flew right along."

"If I can only suit him! Do you think I can, Hannah?" asked Kate eagerly.

"I think so, if you can only read the manuscript readily; for you write as well as I do," said Hannah.

"Did he tell you how much he should pay per page?" asked Kate.

"No; he said he would see how we progressed."

"I dread working under his eye," said Kate, "but then I'll endure considerable and sacrifice some pride to make a little money; for I need some badly."

"I want to earn enough to go home respectably," said Hannah. "It won't answer to go looking like a

parcel of beggars; and in the morning, Kate, you must go around with me, and find if he will employ you; and won't it be grand to work together?"

"I do believe 'Nijah is coming," exclaimed Mary as they heard a heavy step in the hall; and she ran and opened the door. "No, it isn't either; it's that fat boy;" and she was about to shut the door, when the "fat boy," who was forever making rhymes, exclaimed recklessly, —

"Miss De Witt is in a fit; and her son isn't come."

"Who is with her?" asked Mary, rushing down-stairs without waiting for the question to be answered.

"Who?" asked Hannah, running to the door.

"Go and see, and you'll find Miss B.," said the boy, going up to the attic.

The girls ran down-stairs, and saw Mary standing very pale near the open door of Mr. De Witt's room.

"She's dead! and what will her son do when he comes?" whispered Mary.

"Has the doctor come?"

"Yes, and gone again; but they don't know where to look for Mr. De Witt. Let us go up-stairs; he may come in, you know; and we never can tell him his mother is dead." They were about to go up-stairs, when the door opened, and the young man so suddenly made motherless entered the hall smiling pleasantly. Something in their faces seemed to startle him; and as he passed into his own room, they ascended the stairs, and left him with his sorrow. They were sad and silent that night, though they had anticipated a joyful evening; for they kept thinking continually of the still cold form below, of the mother's voice hushed forever, and the mother's tender loving heart silent,

and they walked carefully and spoke in low tones. They thought too of their own mother, and shuddered as they contemplated what the world would be without her tender solicitude, her beautiful smile, her unselfish love and care; and home joys and comforts rose up before them in all their tempting loveliness. Silently they lay down on their little beds; and Hannah and Kate looked up at the cold starry sky, and thought long and seriously; but Mary hid her face in the pillow and wept for the young man in the room below, so suddenly left without a mother's sympathy and care. They were tender, quiet little tears that wet her cheeks; and through them she saw a pair of soft mournful eyes, while strains of beautiful music seemed floating about her, — the same that had thrilled her so that afternoon, coming from the organ, and the heart of the organist. She lay very quiet and still, with her hands clasped together, and her face as placid as a rose dripping with dew, while her thoughts were a tender mixture of sadness and undefined joy, of sympathy and vague, trembling hope.

Was she losing her heart, and experiencing those painfully rapturous feelings that once during a life-time take possession of the soul?

Was there stealing over her that subtle power, so sweet to feel, and felt but once in its most perfect freshness and beauty? Was she sinking into that delicious bondage that deifies a human being, and gives to him every beautiful and noble attribute of which a heart can conceive? Were her sisters' fears founded upon reality, and their doubts upon truth? These were not Mary's thoughts; and hardly knowing the state of her mind, or but dimly guessing the state of her heart, she fell asleep with the tears of sympa-

thy still lingering on her cheeks, and strains of enchanting melody floating in the ear of her imagination.

David De Witt did not sleep all the night through; and with his face in his hands sat and thought of his loss. The friend of all his days and years had left him. Who would care for him now? Who would watch at his bedside when he was sick? As these thoughts floated through his brain dimly, he saw a pair of soft blue eyes and a full, rosy mouth; and a little hand seemed wandering across his hair. In vain he tried to banish the picture from his vision; it would appear before him, and shut out for a moment the dead white face of her who had so suddenly passed into a new existence, and bring him a ray of comfort. "All alone," he cried; but instantly he felt the presence of a fair young face, and a sweet low voice saying, "I am here," and he put forth his arms only to draw them back empty. And so the night passed away; and a dull cold morning came, but found the dead face more rigid, and the bereaved heart more desolate.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A NEW EMPLOYMENT AND A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

STEPHEN ST. MAUR was not so wonderful or mysterious a character as might be inferred from his singular appearance in the presence of the three young girls who had accidentally made his acquaintance, and were destined to continue it. He was simply a man with intense feeling, baffled in the greatest attempt of his life, and suddenly disappointed in the highest and brightest hopes of his existence. The next morning, when Hannah and Kate entered his office, he sat at his desk engaged only in deep thought. This was not an unusual thing, though what his thoughts were no one ever knew but himself. He did not seem to notice the girls until they had spoken; and then he looked up in an absent kind of way, as though the cause of their appearance was a mystery to him. Kate, however, who was anxious to know her fate, immediately made known her errand, and after copying four lines of the manuscript, as Hannah had done, was accepted in the same quick, decided way. She was so delighted with her success that she couldn't resist giving Hannah a sly nudge expressive of her delight; and Mr. St. Maur looked at them sharply an instant.

"I have your picture at home," he said to Kate.

"I heard of it," answered Kate; "and I am very glad it has fallen into your hands."

"What are you painting now?" he asked, not seeming to notice her remark.

"A portrait."

"Of whom?"

"One of the scholars."

"How can you make any progress in it, if you work here?"

"I don't expect to make much," replied Kate with a little tremor on her lips which she tried to conceal.

Whether the keen blue eyes of Mr. St. Maur noticed the emotion or not, was not apparent; but he spoke in a kinder tone.

"I would let you take the manuscript home," he said, "only that we do not like to have it go from the office. You can come at any hour you choose to copy."

"Thank you," said Hannah; "then we will come at two in the afternoon, for in the morning we are busy."

"Very well, come at two if you wish, and stay as long as you please; only remember the manuscript must be finished in three weeks without fail."

But little more was said; and though the office was cozy, warm, and comfortable, the girls were glad when they were out of it and in the slippery street. They went directly to Cooper's, for Hannah wished to look at the morning papers, and Kate was anxious to be at work on her portrait. They separated at the door of the reading-room; and Kate ran up the stairs, and was soon seated at her easel, while Hannah glanced over the morning news. She saw nothing of much interest, and obtaining the last number of the "Atlantic Monthly" at the desk, sat down, and was soon deeply absorbed in its contents. She had sat there perhaps a

half-hour when she was suddenly startled by a tap on her shoulder, and, looking up, saw Kate standing near her, and beckoning her out into the hall. They had only passed the threshold when Kate whispered, in a quick hurried tone, "I have got a caller up-stairs. You see I was so surprised to find a perfect stranger as I thought. I was just shading the nostrils of my portrait, when I was informed some one wished to see me. I thought it was you, and was a little vexed because you called so soon, and ran out in haste, for I wanted to be back again at work. I looked around for you, but only saw a very portly and white-haired gentleman sitting there; and then I began to get a little confused.

"Was I Miss Windsor? he inquired, and I replied that I was, and then we shook hands; and he said he was Mr. Worth, an old friend of my father and uncles; and of course I had heard of him a great many times, and we saw him once, you know, a long time ago. He is the pleasantest, handsomest gentleman you ever saw really, and looks so saintly, with white hair and beard."

"Has he gone?"

"No; he wants to see you. He said he heard I was attending the School of Design; and he thought this morning, as he was passing the Institute, that he would call and see me; and then I told him you were in the reading-room, and he wished me to call you; and I tell you, Hannah, his opinions will suit you exactly; they do me. But here we are at the door, and you must judge for yourself."

Mr. Worth arose as the girls entered, — a handsome man, about fifty years of age, with an eye that had lost none of the brightness and sparkle of youth, though

his hair was as white as the snow. He greeted Hannah with that easy kindness that won her heart at once; and very soon they were seated in a group together and conversing pleasantly.

"What are *you* doing in this great city?" he asked, looking at Hannah and smiling. She blushed a little, for she hardly knew what reply to make.

"I write some," she said at last, "and learn a great deal."

He understood her at once, and expressed her own thoughts more clearly than she could have expressed them herself. "It is necessary," he said, "to gain knowledge from books; but it is also necessary to learn by experience, to see as well as read about objects, to become acquainted with people and their numberless inventions, and to gain an insight into the mystery of human nature and human projects." He said this in a quick, decided way peculiar to himself, and in a tone so positive, no one would have attempted to doubt or disbelieve him, even if he had asserted something less probable. "It is a great pleasure and satisfaction to me," he continued, "to see young ladies trying to do something, to educate themselves, to work independently;" and the pleasure and satisfaction that he mentioned shone in his very face as he spoke.

"It is working against the tide, however," said Kate.

"Yes, it is now, that is true; but the tide isn't always going out, and if more women would set to paddling their own canoes, instead of sitting idle, and letting it drift, always looking out for an oarsman, you may be sure the tide would turn very soon. Rather than row the boat themselves you know, they often accept of very poor sailors, who paddle the canoe down stream, and then let it drift on the rocks. But were I a young

lady, I should greatly prefer rowing against than with such a tide of fashion and display as there is now."

"Yes, indeed," said Hannah, delighted with the ideas thus expressed, "I think, after all, those who float with such a tide have a much more tedious life to live."

"You are right, and I wish all girls and women could see it in the same light," he said; "and I am gratified and pleased to find the daughters of my friend so well started in the right path. It is one of the strongest desires of my life to see women lifted up, and educated with all the thoroughness and advantages of the other sex."

Kate glanced at Hannah with a look that said, "Didn't I tell you so? Hasn't he got splendid opinions?" and Hannah's face shone with the pleasure and hope that his words gave to her. He stayed but a short time, but long enough to make an impression so deep on the girls' minds that it never wore away. He asked them few questions, for his keen eye discovered a diffidence in speaking of their circumstances; but he left them a beautiful and ennobling book, which he had brought as a present, and which the girls subsequently read over and over with interest and benefit.

They passed into the hall with him when he went, and somehow the clasp of his hand and the pleasant gleam of his magnetic eye increased their aspirations, and encouraged them in their efforts. Few persons are blessed with this mysterious influence over others; but fewer, if possessed of it, use it for good. When, therefore, such a person is found, happy are they who gain him as a friend; for his friendship is more valuable than much gold. His presence gives vigor to the mind of those he appreciates, and his affection revives the high aspirations of the soul, and elevates the long-

ings of the heart. Mr. Worth could only be a very wicked or a very good man; for his animal and spiritual propensities and powers were exceedingly strong; but the intellectual being placed on the side of the spiritual, it triumphed, and the natural desires of the flesh were obliged to submit to the divine qualities of the spirit. Nothing more sublime God ever created than a man overruling his animal nature by his intellectual and spiritual.

Mr. Worth had had many bitter experiences, and passed through many trials; but he had borne all with that cheerful submission that comes only through hope of better things in the eternal life; and his step was firm and buoyant, and his voice the very tone of cheerfulness and hope. Yet he was a man at the head of an extensive business, a keen calculator, a shrewd inspector, but ever honest in his dealings with rich and poor, and always highly respected and honored. It is difficult to find a man with a character so varied, and composed of so many different phases, as was his; and yet there was harmony in it all.

One would only need to look into his handsome face to pronounce him at once a man of uncommon benevolence and generosity. There was nothing hard or cynical in his face, as is so often apparent in the faces of business men; no mark of selfishness, of greediness for gain, no sternness or look of repulsion, but a quiet firmness, a touch of seriousness, and a gentle gravity. He was a character fit for a hero, and one altogether necessary to be introduced into this history of my brave young girls; but they did not at this first pleasant meeting realize how much their future success depended upon his generosity and kindness. Hannah and Kate, however, worked with renewed hope that day, and success seemed nearer and more certain.

Mr. St. Maur sat at his desk when they went to the office at two o'clock; but he did not seem deeply engaged, and watched them in a kind of absent way, as they copied the manuscript at a desk not far distant with unflagging industry, hardly looking up from one hour to another. A hint of what his thoughts were might have been obtained from his remarks when the girls laid their copy before him, and were about to leave the office.

"When people desire a thing so earnestly that they will work hard to obtain it, perhaps they will not be so easily tempted, and so ready to throw away that which they have obtained," he said so abruptly that the girls could not divine his meaning, and did not reply. "The ball did not hurt you?" he said, with a strange, quizzical look; and the girls blushed and pulled at the fingers of their gloves uneasily.

"I don't think it did us any good, only as it taught us a lesson, and caused us to hate balls forever afterwards," said Kate.

"We did not intend to go but once," said Hannah, "and I suppose we shall never want to go again."

"Well, you have done your work satisfactorily," he said, "and perhaps your responsibilities will save you."

The girls repeated his words over and over when by themselves, and tried to conjecture why he talked so strangely, and seemed so distrustful.

In their room they found Mary very quiet and still, and she told them that Mr. De Witt's mother had just been taken away to the cemetery.

"Poor boy!" said Hannah, thinking a little uneasily of the severity she had used the day before in reference to his friendly acts towards Mary. "I know he is a good young man."

Mary's face brightened.

"He looks so pale and mournful," she said.

"We can sympathize with him," said Hannah; "but 'each must bear his own,' or there would never be any joy in the world."

"I met him to-day, and shook hands with him," said Mary, glad the girls would listen without reproof, "and he seemed to want a friend so much."

And so they talked, as usual discussing the day's doings, and the time went by.

Their prospects grew fairer and brighter as the weeks passed away; for the clouds began to scatter, as is always the case when perseverance falters not, but drives on with steady determination.

Hannah and Kate had finished their manuscript copying, but not without some trials and vexations. One of the office clerks had greatly annoyed them by his attentions, first asking them to attend a ball, and then a theatre, both of which offers they had refused with decision. Then he had offered Kate a present of a pearl necklace, which, to her artistic eye, was indeed charming in its velvet case; but she refused it, and very soon after said to Mr. St. Maur, —

"We cannot copy for you, sir, if that silly clerk torments us with his odious attentions."

Mr. St. Maur laughed, though Kate couldn't tell why, and his face seemed for a moment to clear up into sunshine.

"You may expect no more attentions from him," he said; and with a simple "Thank you," Kate left him.

When they had finished their work, and were about to leave the office for the last time, they stopped to bid Mr. St. Maur "good-by."

Hannah, who had finished her last page before Kate, sat and watched him as he wrote at his desk.

Had he changed since first she saw him, or had closer acquaintance accustomed her to his stern and distrustful look until it seemed stern and distrustful no longer? His looks seemed now more suggestive of weariness and sadness; and the scowl on his brow was no longer perceivable. There was a choking sensation in her throat as she looked at him. Was it of pity, or of sadness because of the parting so near at hand? *She* called it pity then; but in the future days, when she could not forget him, and, sleeping or waking, his strong, handsome face haunted her, she knew there must be in her heart other emotions.

She stood a little behind Kate when they went to his desk to say "good-by," and it required a mighty effort to keep back the tears that threatened to flood her eyes.

"Finished?" he repeated after Kate with a start; "I thought it would take you a week yet."

"It is all done, sir," said Kate, who always did most of the talking when with Mr. St. Maur.

"And I suppose you are very glad of it," he said, looking keenly into Kate's black eyes.

"Glad of it? yes, sir. I don't know what other emotion I should feel on such an occasion," answered Kate. "If we had been working by the day or hour, probably there would be a difference in our feelings; but as the work brought us only so much whether we finished it sooner or later, I am glad it is done."

The street door opened just then, and a handsome little figure robed in black came fluttering in.

"It is the little widow," whispered Hannah excitedly to Kate; and they stood one side and turned their faces from her. She went directly to Mr. St. Maur's

desk without seeming to notice the girls who were standing closely together, and wishing she would stay but a moment.

"What are you in the office at this hour for?" she said, in a lively, half-bantering tone. "I went to your room to find you, and then had to come way down here. What has happened? It is four o'clock and past; and I never knew before that you came to your office at all in the afternoon. But that's not what I came for, to inquire into your business; I have got too much of my own. I'm leaving off black, you know, and I want some money; and I am in great haste too. Mrs. Clipper is in the carriage waiting for me. She offered to assist me in doing my shopping, and it's getting late. I've just been telling Mrs. Clipper about those three country girls you took to the ball; and such a laugh as we had! I told her I didn't think you had ever seen them since, or ever wanted to. Dear me! what a time that was!" and the little widow laughed and rustled her black silk.

"How much money do you want?" asked Mr. St. Maur sternly.

"If I hadn't mentioned those girls, probably you wouldn't have asked that question for at least fifteen minutes. How you do like to change that subject! and I do like to tease you about it. I want seventy-five dollars, at the least calculation. Mrs. Clipper wanted to know if you had answered any advertisements since. You may give me a hundred dollars; I shall need it."

Mr. St. Maur arose, went to the money drawer, and soon brought her back a roll of bills.

"There is the money," he said; "and if you are in haste, the less you linger here, the better."

"There! didn't I take just the right way to keep you from hindering a half-hour. Wasn't it keen in me?" and the little widow made a curtesy, and departed.

There was the old scowl on Mr. St. Maur's face when the girls turned again to his desk, and Hannah felt less inclination to cry since hearing the remarks of the little widow.

"Good-by, sir," said Kate.

"Stop," said Mr. St. Maur, "I shall walk home with you," and, putting on his overcoat and fur cap, passed out with them into the street.

"It is very slippery," he said, and, stepping between the two girls, drew their hands under his arms. His touch sent a strange thrill into Hannah's heart. Was it because he was so mysterious and singular? Was it not a thrill of fear, he seemed so strong and powerful? She could not tell, and for some time did not speak.

"What will you do now for employment?" asked Mr. St. Maur, breaking the silence.

"Go without until we can find some," said Kate, who had been thinking of the ball, and felt a little tart. "There is no danger of our starving; and we have a father and mother, and a comfortable home."

"Ah! you have a comfortable home, and come to the city to distress yourselves?" he said sarcastically, and yet in a tone of interest.

"No; we might have distressed ourselves without taking that trouble," said Kate; and Hannah could not restrain a smile at the pert reply, neither could Mr. St. Maur, though it was not noticed.

"We came to the city as thousands of others do to gain advantages and advance our interests."

"And have you succeeded?"

"We have learned a great deal more than we should have done in the country, probably, where the deep snows and heavy rains keep us in the house weeks and weeks, and where there is nothing to be seen but the same objects over and over. I suppose we have a right to try our luck, or go to seek our fortunes, as boys and men do;" and Kate stepped a little more firmly on the slippery pavement.

"You agree with that sentiment, I suppose," said Mr. St. Maur, looking down at Hannah; "and do you have any idea you will arrive at anything great? I don't."

"What do you call great?" asked Hannah, in that tone which suggested that she had a thousand thoughts just then crowding her brain.

"Well, anything more than ordinary."

"I never expect to be a Raphael," said Kate; "but I expect to be an artist and a good one."

How much the confidence in our own powers increases the confidence of others in them! and though at Kate's remark Mr. St. Maur laughed a little sneeringly, he felt its influence, and was impressed in her favor.

"I never expect to be a Browning, a Bronté, or a Dickens," said Hannah; but I intend to be something, if I live."

"Wouldn't both of you prefer to be Mrs. Smith, and have your carriage and your diamonds, and no thought of earning success or a livelihood?" he asked, looking first at one and then at the other.

"If we preferred it, probably we should be seeking it," said Hannah.

"Where in the deuce"—he checked himself—"where did you pick up such notions as you have? at a woman's rights convention?"

"Where did you get your notions of independence and individuality?" asked Kate.

"We never went to a woman's rights convention," said Hannah, thinking Kate a little severe. "We never had the opportunity."

"Then those daring advocates can take none of the credit of your strong-minded notions; but if you should talk to me steadily from now till next week, you wouldn't convince me that you will not be married and settled down perhaps before a year, and all these efforts be lost."

"I suppose you have heard of such things as old maids," said Kate, "and know that it is not impossible for a woman to become one; then why are you so sure we shall marry?"

"I might have modified my assertion," he said, "by saying you would be married if you had offers."

"Time will settle the question," said Hannah. "I'm sure we cannot divine the future; and I think we will some time show you, Mr. St. Maur, that even ordinary talents can be made to do wonders when guided by perseverance and industry; and if marriage puts a stop to progress, we will leave it for some future day."

"Convince me," he said, "that a woman with even ordinary attractions, and perhaps more than ordinary ability, without genius, which *must* work itself out, can climb the ladder successfully, and make herself useful, and her mark in the arts, sciences, or professions, and I will give each of you a gold medal, and a present that will charm you."

"We shall remember your promise, Mr. St. Maur, and hold you to it besides," said Kate; and they all laughed.

"So shall I remember it," said Mr. St. Maur, "and I am earnest. Here is your number, however. Good night."

Before the girls could hardly collect their senses, he was gone, and they went to their room to tell Mary all that had happened.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### CHARITY.

"SOMETHING *must* be done, or they will die," said Hannah, looking up suddenly, after a few moments' meditation.

"Yes, and *we* must do it," said Kate, pinning a bow on the hat she was trimming.

"And what can we do when we are so soon to leave the city?" said Mary, in a kind of important tone, as if leaving the city was a matter of experience to them, and a trifle aristocratic.

"That is the very obstacle in our way," said Hannah. "If only we were to remain here, we could take some care of them, and at least see that they didn't starve; but as it is, you know, as soon as we are gone they will have no one to give them the least attention; and as for giving them money, why, we have only enough to take us home, and buy us a few necessary articles of dress."

"I have already given up my picture-frame for them," said Kate; "not that I in the least regret it, but it is the only money I can spare, you know."

"Can't we enlist some one in their favor? there are many people who have plenty of money," said Hannah.

"And many who are in just such distressing circumstances as Mrs. Blossom and her boy; besides, what rich person do we know?" said Kate.

"Mr. St. Maur." Hannah said this in a low, quick tone, as though she feared some one besides her sisters would hear, or that they would think her presuming or absurd.

"Yes, Mr. St. Maur," repeated Kate eagerly, and in a tone of hope and fear commingled.

"Mr. St. Maur is the right person, I am sure," said Mary, "and this will be a good opportunity to prove his saintship. If he refuses to assist this poor widow and her sick boy, we may conclude the little widow is a piece of absurdity."

"And doesn't know a saint from a sinner," said Kate. "Just stop a moment and see if this feather ought to go this way or that way. It's an old thing, but then, since I have doctored it, I think it looks very well;" and she held the hat that she was trimming, up to the girls' view.

"That way, by all means," said Mary. "I wish my hat looked as well as yours; but then if we can once get home" —

"We ought to be perfectly satisfied," put in Hannah, "especially when we have under our observation and on our hands such a poor heart-broken creature as Mrs. Blossom. I should think she might tell us of her past life. She is so silent."

"I have tried in every delicate way possible," said Mary, "to learn if she has any relatives, but I am sure I can't get even a hint."

"She doesn't wish to tell, no doubt," said Kate, "and the question now is, shall we inform Mr. St. Maur of her needs, and ask his assistance?"

"I think so," said Mary, quickly.

"I can see no other way," said Hannah. "If Miss Brechandon only didn't have so much to attend to in

the church, she might go and see her now and then; but I don't know but she would do her more harm than good, if she mistrusted the woman had thought some mismanagement brought the trouble upon herself. Miss Brechandon is stiffer than usual of late, and has been ever since she told us of 'little Annie,' and we gave her such reproofs; perhaps we were rather severe."

"We told her the truth at least, or tried to," said Kate, "and she ought to be able to hear that and bear it."

"I know she seems colder and stiffer, and hardly comes to our room now at all," said Mary, "but I met her in the hall the other day; and she actually gave me a little hug in that quick peculiar way of hers, and never said one word. She looks pale and troubled, and goes out very often, so much oftener than she used to; and this noon I saw her coming in looking so tired and white."

"Perhaps she is thinking of little Annie, and her conscience troubles her; I should think it would; but I pity her," said Kate.

"So do I," said Hannah, rising; "but she doesn't need the care and attention just now that Mrs. Blossom does, and there is no time to lose. In two days, you know, we are going home."

"Two days?" repeated Kate, with animated countenance. "We counted the months, and then the weeks, and then the days, and now there are only two. Can it be true?"

"Suppose we should find it untrue?" said Mary. "What should we do? could we survive it? Think of it, girls, — only two days."

The winter had all passed away, at last; and floods

of spring sunshine had melted the snow and the ice, and driven away the cold blasts that so long had been howling about the streets; and there was fast drawing an end to the girls' stay in the city.

What had they accomplished?

To what had they attained?

Not to wealth, fame, or notoriety, neither had they expected it. They had accomplished a purpose, and were as nearly satisfied as people are apt to be when they are still pressing on to something better or higher.

Their pecuniary circumstances had prevented them from advancing so rapidly and so far as under more favorable circumstances they might have done; yet comparing their capabilities on the day they said "good-by" to their country home with those they carried back with them, would show a vast improvement. There was a change too, — that change which increased capabilities and development bring; and though that childishness which is almost always discernible in a group of young sisters before they leave the paternal roof was somewhat lost, there was yet present that trusting simplicity which never forsakes hearts which continually grow better and wiser.

Hannah had continued to write for that same sensational paper whose startling and frightful illustrations glared at her with reproof, and set her heart to beating for shame if her secret seemed at any time in danger. She could not throw her heart into her work, though she many times became animated and excited when she wrote, and produced a chapter of beauty and refinement. These chapters she soon found were objected to by her publisher; and so with a sigh she ceased to write the lofty aspirations of her soul, but

made it her object to please the groveling part of humanity, the noisy rabble, the thoughtless and inconsiderate men and women who read as they would drink liquor, not for elevation and improvement, but for stimulation and excitement. She read no sensational novels herself; for some time they had been abandoned, and she began to shrink at last from reading her own stories; and as seeing them in print had once sent the blood rushing to her cheek because of animation and delight, it now caused her to turn away from them annoyed and dissatisfied. Was it a sin for her still to continue to do that which she did not approve, to write what she would not read, and allow her stories to be published in a paper which she in reality, though vaguely, believed was pernicious?

Who shall judge? Here she received pay for her work, when in a higher place she had failed; besides she strove to mingle in her writings good sentiments, and teach through them high morals; but ah! she was injuring herself as well as others. She was crushing or stifling the highest and most beautiful aspirations of her soul, and developing those of a lower nature. As the continual reading of sensational stories that keep the mind in a constant strain and unwholesome excitement until finished, and then leave it weak and exhausted, is injurious and pernicious, so in a much greater degree is the writing of them. Many a fresh and talented young mind, capable of uttering truths to the world, and in a manner that would be listened to and considered, becomes dwarfed and injured from writing only to please the passions, the lower natures of their readers. Not because they prefer this style of writing; not because they would not much rather cultivate a higher sentiment, and add to

the high-toned literature that elevates individual and country, that they contribute to the trashy publications, of which, alas, there are so many; not because their souls do not often cry out for higher and nobler expressions, and weep over the fate that makes them the slaves to a class of people who would strike out all that did not stimulate and excite the reader; but rather because no helping hand is reached out to them, because they learn where they will be compensated, and feel compensation to be a necessity; and so they fall to writing trash, anything to suit the publisher, and the world loses what it otherwise might have gained. This is the class who possess talents; genius will not be kept in a second-class position; it bursts all bonds, overcomes all prejudices, and mounts to the very summit of success.

"Talk not of genius baffled, genius is master of man.
Genius does what it must, and talent does what it can."

Yet the men and women of talent are they who bear the world along nearer and nearer perfection; men and women who have good hearts to guide the brain, who are willing and determined to work unflinchingly for the good of humanity, fearless of popularity. Why, then, should people of talent stop on the threshold of perseverance, because they learn that the fire of genius is not burning within them? Let them march on, nor feel because they cannot rise highest, they cannot rise at all. There is no necessity for mistaking talent for genius; let the person expect nothing, and work on in the path which seems pleasantest and most adapted to his feet. We have tastes as well as talents; there are few if any who have no choice in employments; and who shall frighten people away from that which is dearest and pleasantest, by the

hackneyed phrase, "Poets are born, not made?" Because a romantic young miss takes to rhyming, is, of course, no sign that she will make a Browning. It is probably only because her soul is full of poetry, which pants for expression; yet sillier than she is the teacher or friend who warns her to cease her scribbling, for "Poets are born, not made." Let her weave her thoughts into verse, it will not harm her; it will not be long ere time will bring her into the paths of understanding; and if then she continues her scribbling, if her ideas are lofty and pure, if her heart is full of philanthropy, do not say "nay" to her; she can do no harm; and if no one else is benefited, she will be benefited herself, if she patterns after the lofty literature, and gets beyond the pale of sensation. But keep her, if you can, from pernicious novels; for it were far better not to write at all than write that which rather degrades than elevates.

Fiction may be made one of the charming avenues through which the reader is led on to noble truths and delightful aspirations, and then it becomes a necessity in its elevation of mankind; but when it is used to excite rather than overcome the animal passions, it becomes a necessity, in the advancement of man's moral and spiritual nature, to banish it. One means of banishment is to teach young writers the harm in becoming the authors of such trash, and to help them by encouragement to write on a loftier plane, or to write not at all. Many a heart has longed for this encouragement, and found it not. Here was an instance of it.

The reader has already discovered that Hannah possessed noble and lofty ideas, that her mind was far above her writings, and that she gladly would have

used her pen for a higher work; but though many condemned that which she wrote, no one assisted her to write better. Every one at times needs assistance. We are too dependent upon each other, and too nearly allied, to struggle wholly by ourselves, and succeed without a helping hand. There was little enjoyment for Hannah in authorship; and yet there was little enjoyment outside of it. Hope was the bright star that led her on, and kept her aspirations noble and true; and perseverance would not let her fail. This winter in New York had given her great experience and strength, as also it had fructified her mind, and made it smoother, and more elastic.

Kate found little conflict between her employment and her conscience; but there were many things to trouble her, and much to learn and unlearn. Opportunity was what she longed for most, more time to spend at her easel, and in the galleries of art; and then, too, she sometimes felt that lack of confidence in her powers, that depreciation of her own merits, which is such a bugbear to mental laborers. Still she had learned much and conquered much during the winter, and stood ready for further energies and accomplishments.

Mary, too, had had her many trials and disadvantages. She had sometimes grown impatient over the inferior piano in her room, where she drilled and drilled, morning and night, and tried to learn much without much time or opportunity. But when Mr. De Witt became her teacher, and the organ was at her disposal two hours each day, so rapidly did she improve that she sometimes astonished herself with the fine and rare melodies which she produced. And so her winter in New York had wonderfully improved

and benefited her in her chosen profession; and strengthened her for future practice and action. The few acquaintances which they made, they did not forget, neither were they forgotten by them.

Mr. St. Maur they sometimes met, oftenest in their own street, and at times at the foot of their own steps; but he never called for them at the door, never intruded upon them, and grew polite and even deferential. He did not scowl upon them or say harsh things to them any longer, for the simple reason that he had learned to respect them, to believe at least in their sincerity and honesty. He had thought much as he sat at the desk and watched Hannah and Kate, often hours at a time, as they faithfully copied the manuscript before them. His thoughts at such times were quiet, subdued thoughts, such as he had not indulged in for many a long, long year, and such as were necessary to scatter the gloom and distrust which had darkened and obscured the geniality of his heart. In fact, the girls began to look upon him as their friend, to feel less fear and restraint in his presence, and to meet him with smiles and looks of welcome; and at last Hannah and Kate could not go into the street without looking for his portly form and listening to hear his footstep behind them. Sometimes he would meet one alone, sometimes both together; but he never presented them with anything more than tiny bouquets, and never once mentioned giving them assistance. He had once asked Kate to sell him a pretty crayon, which she was taking home from Cooper's, and she consented to do so. He had then asked her price in a business way, and refused to make any suggestions concerning it himself. Kate had hesitated, for she could form no idea of what it was worth, and told him so; but he

would not help her, and at last, almost vexed, she had said, —

"Well, sir, if you will take my price, when I know so little about it, I am not at fault, and shall charge five dollars."

He took from his pocket-book a five-dollar bill, no more and no less, and passed it to her without comment. Kate thought this a large price, but his thoughts she could not discern. No favors came unexpectedly, or from sources unknown to them; but through their own exertions they had come to live in a comparatively comfortable manner.

Fortunately Mary had found a most excellent teacher, who taught her faithfully for a very small remuneration. Mr. De Witt seemed sadder, and his eyes grew more mournful, after his mother's death. He would play strange, weird, and mournful melodies, and Mary's heart was touched with pity, and —

"Pity swells the tide of love."

It was one bright, sunshiny March day, when Mary went as usual to take her lesson, that he did not desert the stool, but placed a sheet of music before him, entitled "Alone," and composed by himself, and played it through to her. With clasped hands Mary listened, and it seemed as if the young organist threw all of his soul and strength into the piece, making the very feelings of his lonely heart vibrate in every tone. When he had finished, he turned to Mary to find her eyes uplifted, as if listening to heavenly strains, while the tears streamed down her cheeks, and fell drop by drop upon her clasped hands. A flash of light crossed the young man's face, while a look of triumph shone from his mournful eyes. He started up and advanced toward her eagerly, involuntarily reaching out his arms,

and uttering her name in the pleading, tender tones that a woman cannot mistake. She unclasped her hands then, and sat up hastily, for she was leaning forward; and, brushing the tears from her eyes, was herself again. Mr. De Witt stepped back, and his eyes grew more mournful than before. Neither spoke for several minutes, and then it was Mary.

"My emotion speaks for your music what my words cannot," she said; and he said simply, "I am glad you like it;" and then they were teacher and pupil, but never again with the freedom and simplicity that they possessed before. Mary had ceased to talk of him much to the girls. She had grown diffident, and a little fearful of her own heart, which she could not carry home as fresh and free as she brought it to the city. And so the time had passed away until two days in great New York was the time remaining before they should depart.

'Nijah had not been forgotten in all the days that had come since that Christmas morning when he startled them so by his unexpected appearance; but they had not seen him often, for he seemed to enter into his work with zest, determined to improve every moment. Sometimes, however, he came to see them in the evenings; but he seemed to get more bashful and diffident, instead of more easy and bold, and somehow there seemed to have arisen something between them which they could not well get over. The girls talked of this sometimes, and tried to conjecture what had come over 'Nijah to make him so still and different; but they were unsuccessful, and 'Nijah gave no sign.

It was now two days before their intended departure from the city, and they were trying to invent some way to assist Neil Blossom and his mother, who

were now both sick and in great need of assistance. For weeks they had visited them often, and often sacrificed their own pleasure to give them some comfort; but now they were about to leave them, and as Mrs. Blossom had given up all work from necessity, the girls were in a quandary as to the manner in which they should provide for her; for they dared not leave her unprovided for.

"We will go and see Mr. St. Maur then," said Kate, after they had decided to seek his assistance. "Shall I go alone, or you, or shall we go both together?"

Hannah thought a moment. There were not many more days when there would be a probability of seeing Mr. St. Maur; in two little days perhaps they would never see him again, and she wished to go, and was grateful for the errand that would take her into his presence.

"We will both go," she said; and they prepared themselves, and went to his office. He looked up from his desk, and his face glowed with pleasure mingled with surprise, as he saw the girls advancing; and how different was his greeting from that which he had first given them! He arose and took each cordially by the hand, and then they all sat down near the little desks where the girls had copied the manuscript.

"You haven't come for employment this time, I am sure," he said, "for you are soon to leave the city."

"Not for employment, but to ask a favor," said Kate, who thought it better at all times to be explicit.

For the first time for weeks the girls saw that old scowl cloud the before placid brow of Mr. St. Maur, and his mouth put on that forbidding look which sent the old dread and fear into their hearts.

"To ask a favor?" he repeated, a little sneeringly. "Well, that is no uncommon thing, for ladies especially. Please make it known at once."

"Are you in haste? if so, we will not detain you at all;" and Kate's face flushed resentfully, and she half arose, but sat down again as Mr. St. Maur spoke.

"What is the favor you wish to ask?" he said in that authoritative tone which demanded an answer.

"Don't think, sir, that we hesitate to ask you," said Hannah, "on account of diffidence, for it is as much your business to help the poor as ours." She spoke more spiritedly than was her wont with Mr. St. Maur, who usually exerted an influence over her that forbade much talk of this kind.

He laughed then, though in a restrained manner, and began to look curious.

"What, then, is the obstacle in the way?" he asked.

"Nothing but your manner," said Kate, pertly. "There is a poor sick woman, and her little boy who is a cripple, that we have long been interested in, and assisted as far as we were able; but now that we are about to leave the city, we felt it a duty to find help for them somewhere, and as we have few acquaintances, we could only think of you among them able to render them the assistance they need."

The cloud passed away from Mr. St. Maur's brow; and he looked at the girls closely and attentively a moment, then he thrust his hand into his pocket, and before they could speak laid a roll of bills on the desk before them.

"I am glad to relieve those who are in trouble," he said; "take that money and make them comfortable; and let her call for more when it is gone."

Hannah took the bills and counted them. There were fifty dollars. Half of it she gave back to him.

"There is too much," she said; "Mrs. Blossom would be afraid of robbers, if she had so much money about her. We will take the twenty-five dollars, and do for her what we can, and what we think best; and then if you would keep the rest, and send her three or four dollars a week, I think it would be a wiser and better way."

Kate was taken with that plan at once.

"Your errand boy could take it to her," she said, "and probably in a week or two she will be able to work again; and then she will let you know, and you could cease your weekly installments; but we only suggest."

"That is just as well," said Mr. St. Maur, "but she must not know where the money comes from; it is always better otherwise. Give me the number now if you please, and I will hand it to my clerk with directions, before I forget it."

They handed him a piece of paper with the street and number upon it all ready for him, and he took it to his clerk.

"We are greatly obliged to you," said Hannah, when he returned; "you have not only assisted Mrs. Blossom, but have relieved us of a great responsibility;" and they both arose to depart.

Mr. St. Maur seemed suddenly to fall into one of his absent moods, and made no reply to Hannah's words of thanks.

"We may not see you again," said Kate.

He started then, and said somewhat fiercely, "Why, are you going so soon?"

"In two days."

He asked them how they were going, and what time they would start, and then bowed to them and said "Good day," nothing more; and the girls left him.

"If we should never see him again!" said Hannah, forgetting herself a moment, and giving utterance to what was in her heart; but Kate only clasped her hand more closely, and they walked on.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE OLD STORY.

"KATE!"

The tall young lady in a gray suit, which was old and worn enough to be recognized, halted suddenly in her rapid walk in the street, and looked behind her. It was Kate hurrying home in the spring twilight, and thinking of home, sweet home, which she should see on the morrow.

A very tall and somewhat awkward young man came toward her with long quick strides, breathing hard and loudly. It was 'Nijah, with his face very red, and his long arms swinging by his sides, while his heart went thump, thump against his heavy vest.

"You go like a bird a-flyin'," he said in a voice which, on account of excitement, he did not temper to a lower key, as he had learned to do in the street.

"By jingo," he continued, "I've chased you from one street to another till I'm 'bout tired out."

Kate laughed, and waited till he was by her side.

"I had no idea of it, of course," she said, "or I should have been glad enough to have waited for you, and had your company home, for it is rather unpleasant to walk alone through the streets after dark."

"You was safe, though," said 'Nijah, pleased with Kate's words, "while my eye was on you, though of course you couldn't feel it. I called to you once or twice; but you didn't seem to hear."

"I was busily thinking of home," said Kate.

'Nijah dropped his eyes and looked thoughtful a moment.

"To-morrow you are going," he said at last; "what a blank New York will be after that!"

In many ways 'Nijah had improved since he had gone to New York, but he could never change that tall Yankee form of his into that of a graceful, easy gentleman; neither could he, only in part, change his manner of speech. He was born to be rough, but kind and always noble. Many an epithet had been hurled at him that cut him to the very heart, but like those of noble and soaring natures, he never replied, but worked on, his face set toward the one object of his life which he hoped to attain.

"Are you homesick, 'Nijah?" asked Kate, looking kindly toward him, and speaking something as a mother would speak to a child.

Like young men in general, he was ashamed to shed a tear; but in spite of his efforts to the contrary, his eyes filled, and his lip quivered; but he trusted to the gathering twilight to hide his emotion from Kate.

"It seems lonesome as fury to stay in so big a city without an old friend to speak to, with no one to understand and excuse my blunders; but then it isn't homesickness. I never should be homesick. Tell Sally, please, that I'm doing first-rate, and have no notion yet of smoking or chewing, saying nothing of drinking. Tell pa I get wages, and they say I shall be a good workman; but there's a bit of news for you, Kate."

"For me? anything good? What is it about?"

"O, it's only about me. I've been having good luck."

"Tell, then, do, as soon as possible. I am always interested in your luck, 'Nijah; and if you have no objections, I will take your arm, for we are so often driven apart and interrupted;" and in a moment Kate's white hand rested on 'Nijah's heavy coat-sleeve. His arm trembled, and he choked in attempting to speak; and then for a moment remained silent, giving quick, furtive glances toward the hand that rested so still and white upon his arm.

"Tell me now," said Kate, who began to think there was really something of importance going to be told, since 'Nijah seemed so moved.

"It is such a great thing for me," he said, "because it is what I have so longed to do, though I hardly understood it exactly when at home; and it makes a feller hope, you know, that he may rise a little higher than a day-laborer; and that's what I want. I couldn't be contented nohow to just work day after day from morning till night, carrying a dinner-kettle with me, and looking rough in the street. Somehow I want to do something more."

"So do thousands of young men feel just so, 'Nijah; and perhaps not one in a hundred comes out as good in the end as an honest day-laborer."

"I know what you mean, but I don't mean that. I am willing to work years for it. I don't expect to make a fortune in a month or a year. It isn't money or ease exactly that I desire, but it's to have work that I like, and that which will be profitable."

"I can't say one word against those ideas; and now tell me, 'Nijah, what is your good luck?"

"Well, I'm learning to be a draughtsman." 'Nijah straightened himself up and looked very proud when he said this; and Kate said, giving his arm just

such a squeeze as she would have given Hannah's or Mary's on such occasion: —

"'Nijah, it is just what I hoped for you, and I am very glad; but how and why did you put such a desire into effect?"

"Mr. Lake takes boarders, you know, and one of the boarders is a man who drafts meeting-houses and other splendid buildings, and I room with him. Evenin's, you know, I don't often go out, but sit and draw and draw, and wish I could draw to some purpose. I showed my drawings to the draughtsman, and — I hope it won't sound like bragging to tell it — he slapped me on the shoulder and said, '*You* ought to study drafting, you would beat *me* in a short time,' and that's saying a trifle more than you can appreciate, for he thinks he can do a great deal. I was excited enough to fly, and I told him I wanted to take lessons most desperately, and asked him if he knew of any teachers of such things; and if you'll believe it, he offered to teach me himself, and I've taken lessons a week, and I wish you could see some of my drawings."

"O 'Nijah, this is indeed good luck," said Kate, "and I am just as sure of your success as though it had come to you;" and in anticipation of what was sure to come, Kate began to grow proud of the bashful, awkward Adonijah, for she saw him, in imagination, a man of mark, and she stepped a little more briskly by his side.

"You are sure of my success? then I am, and I'll work night and day to bring it about. Now, Kate, I've got something else to say to you, and I take courage because you are sure of my success. But if I thought I was to be President of the United States of America,

and have all the money I wanted, I should be perfectly wretched if — if" — 'Nijah stopped here, and blew his nose furiously on a red-bordered handkerchief; and Kate, dimly guessing for the first time the young man's feelings, felt her blood grow chill in her veins, while her hand fairly shook upon his arm; but she said kindly, feeling it were better to know and hear whatever it was, —

"Tell me, 'Nijah, and have it done with. If it is anything about me, probably you must be disappointed; but tell, and we will see."

"It is all about you, Kate," he said, forgetting all diffidence in his earnestness. "If it wasn't for you, I shouldn't want to live. It is for you I work, and for you I want to be something more than a coarse day-laborer; and it's for you that I *will* be successful. The fact is, Kate, I've liked you all along almost ever sence I can remember, and I've dreamed about your black eyes night after night, and thought how I would work for you night and day, and let you be a lady and paint pictures; but I didn't mean to tell you so soon, only I was so 'fraid of losing you; and, besides, I see my way clearer since I commenced taking lessons, and I was bound to speak; and if you will give me jest a little encouragement, if it's only one word, I'll work like a slave, and will make the man you wouldn't be ashamed to marry."

He stopped here, and they found themselves at the foot of the steps that led to Kate's room. She slipped her hand from his arm, and stood before him in the lamp-light.

Her black eyes were full of pity and regret, and her face was pale; but she tried to speak calmly and decisively.

"'Nijah," she said in a kind tone, "you have made a mistake in caring for me, and you do not know how hard it is for me to disappoint you, when you are such a dear friend, and always have been. I believe this is the first real sorrow of my life; and to-night is the first time, 'Nijah, that I ever thought of such a thing, that you cared for me other than a friend."

'Nijah stood with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, and his chin upon his breast. No one but him who has passed through a similar ordeal can fully sympathize with him, as he saw the bright hopes of his life vanishing away forever.

Kate continued: —

"It would not be so well for either of us, 'Nijah. I am older than you, and we are very different."

"What are years?" he exclaimed, looking up. "Confound 'em, they ain't worth mentioning; and I don't ask you to say you will marry me, only give me a little hope; I shall die without it, or if I don't die I shall give up everything; for what is the use of a feller's working and working to no purpose? O Kate, do say one word of encouragement. I know I'm green and awkward now, and you can't realize that I shall ever be anything else; but I shall. I promise if you will only give me a little hope, that I will make a man you'll not be ashamed of."

"'Nijah, I'm not ashamed of you now, and never shall be so long as you are honest and true; and if I loved you, I would not hesitate one moment to give you all the hope you want; but it is an impossibility to give you one word of hope, for there is no hope, and therefore it would be wrong to give any."

"O, I can't believe it yet, I can't, I can't;" and 'Nijah shook his head, and the blood forsook his brown

face. "I've dreamed of it too long, and hoped and planned my life out for it; and if it's all over now, I am lost, and I wish, how I wish I had stayed to home forever and ever, and not tried to do anything but help pa on the farm, and Sally in the house. I can't believe it yet, Kate; for how can a feller hope and plan for years all for nothing?"

"You are not the only one who has done it, 'Nijah; it is experienced far too often; and you must bear it, and overcome it, for you'll find somebody some day who will be much better suited to you, and with whom you'll be much happier than with me."

"Blamed if I believe that," said 'Nijah, excitedly; "there's nobody in this world that can take your place, Kate, and never will be. I never cared a snap for no girl in the world but you, and I never shall. You don't know what you are doing, Kate; if you did, you could not blight all my hopes so easily."

"Easily?" repeated Kate. "No, 'Nijah, I don't do it easily nor gladly, but because I can do nothing more or less; and when you think it over calmly, you will see it in the same light."

They stood at the top of the stairs now, and 'Nijah drew his sleeve across his eyes, and gulped down a great sob.

"Then it's all up with me," he said. "It seems now, Kate, when I think of the future, as if I see only a great black scarred heap of ruins; I can't see nothing else, not one thing to encourage me. If this was a new notion, it wouldn't come so hard on a feller; but I've thought about it so long, O, so very long!" and 'Nijah drew his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the tears from his eyes, forgetting everything but what he was losing.

"Try, 'Nijah, to overcome it," said Kate in an anxious, pitying tone. "It makes me feel terribly to see you take it so hard, when I cannot help you."

She had touched the right chord at last, for if there was anything that would make 'Nijah forget his trouble, it was to see another suffering; and for a moment the tears ceased to flow, as he said: —

"Don't you worry nothing 'bout it, Kate; you are not to blame. It is I who have made a great mistake, and I must get along with it the best I can." Here he choked and broke down again. "Blamed if I can get along with it any way at all," he said; "I feel just as if I was set adrift, and there wasn't a bit of land in sight." He stopped a moment and looked down silently; then starting, he looked down into the street, not daring to look into Kate's face, and said, "Then it's all up with me, is it, Kate?" He spoke in a despairing tone that sent a thrill of fear through Kate's heart, and she replied with great earnestness: —

"I can never marry you, 'Nijah, *never;* that is impossible; but I do not expect to marry any one. I shall paint, and perhaps some time go to Rome and try to be a benefit to the world, as you must try to be also. Do go on with your lessons in drafting, and try and learn a great deal."

"Well, it's all over with me now, and there's no use in talk; you are going away to-morrow, and I shall not see you again, — perhaps never. Tell Sally what I told you to, please, and tell pa I don't know when I shall come home; and give my love to Dill, and tell her I feel thankful to her for all the kind things she has said to me. Good-by, Kate. I ain't the same person I was when I first saw you to-night, and I never shall be again."

He put out his strong hand and clasped Kate's firmly but tenderly, and for a moment neither spoke: then Kate said with emotion and kindness, "Whatever happens to you, 'Nijah, however much you are disappointed, don't do anything bad. It will only increase your troubles; and above all things, strive to be a good man; for to be good and true is the highest object which we can attain; and let us be the best of friends, and as friends we may work for each other, and strive to be worthy of true, pure friendship, which is to be worthy of much. I shall not forget you, neither need you forget me, and as friends we will be happy yet."

"I can't say no more now," said 'Nijah, "only one thing, Kate, I shall never do a mean thing if I know it. Somehow I can't have no inclination to, but what I shall do I can't tell. There's nothin' has the least charm for me. Good-by, Kate."

"Good-by, Adonijah."

He descended the steps very slowly, and Kate pulled the bell-knob, and stood looking sorrowfully after him. He looked up when he reached the street, and a gleam from the street-lamp revealed a pale face from which all hope and ambition had fled. Yet he smiled very faintly, waved his hand almost gracefully, and walked on.

He moved along the street mechanically with his arms folded across his breast, and his eyes downcast; and there was nothing left to him in all the world that inspired him with the least hope or pleasure. He could hardly believe himself the same person that he was a few hours before, nor did the world seem to be the same it was then.

Kate went to her room with a heavy load at her heart, and told the girls what had happened. They

were greatly surprised, and almost overcome with sorrow for their disappointed young friend.

"O dear, O dear, that is the way with the world," said Hannah, dropping her face in her hands.

"'Whom first we love, you know, we seldom wed,
Time rules us all, and life indeed is not
The thing we planned it out ere hope was dead!'

Then we must bear our sorrow home with us. Don't you think, girls, we are all somewhat, even perceptibly, changed since we came away from the old farmhouse that beautiful October day? It seems we hardly are the same we were then."

Mary was sitting on her own little bed looking down into the street. Hannah's words set her to thinking of her feelings and comparing them with those she brought with her, and she sighed a little sigh, and was silent.

"Yes, we are changed, undoubtedly; we started from home fresh and vigorous, and ready for a winter's work. Now our work is over, and we are tired, and long for rest. It is a very natural change, and one not to be avoided," said Kate, looking around the little room. The piano was gone, the trunks packed, and the walls bare. "If this room could speak!" she said.

"It might tell of joys and sorrows," said Hannah; "but it will know us after to-morrow no more forever. Do you remember, girls, how I said I should try this winter and learn something more about religion?"

"Yes; and I'm afraid we have paid too little attention to it," said Kate.

"Undoubtedly we have," answered Hannah. "Every one does, I believe. But there is one point which I think is now thoroughly settled in my mind."

"What is that?"

"Simply that true religion belongs to no particular sect; that the Christian is one who follows the example, and acts according to the teachings of Christ; and why isn't this enough to know of theology? As far as we elevate our spiritual natures, so much farther we are advanced toward heaven, and so much nearer are we to Christ; and would it not be better to study our own souls, and try to elevate and purify them, than to study all the commentaries and works on theology in the world, which must be countless?"

Miss Brechandon rapped at the door, and entered the room a little more quietly than usual. "I thought I would make you one more call," she said; "you are going to-morrow, but you look rather sad than joyful. One would think you would be nearly crazed with delight to leave this muddy, suffocating hole, and go into the country, and to an old farm-house too, where you will be received with such welcome."

"We are indeed joyful over that, but there is always something to give one a little sadness," said Hannah. "We shall miss you, and think of you often, Miss Brechandon."

"No? shall you think of me? I'm such a cross old maid, I didn't know any one would ever think of me only to be glad to get rid of me."

"Why, Miss Brechandon, you should know better," said Mary, leaving her seat by the window and sitting by the side of Miss Brechandon. "We have really felt lonesome sometimes the last few weeks because you came so seldom to see us."

"And I have been lonesome too," said Miss Brechandon in a softened tone, "and have spent my time, O, so unsuccessfully."

"There is much time spent in that way," said Kate.

"Pray, Miss Brechandon, what have you been trying to do? Could we not have assisted you?"

"Even if you had been able, I could not have asked you. I have been searching and searching for 'little Annie;' but I am afraid she is dead or sunk in some den of shame."

"O, let us hope better things for her," said Hannah, shuddering. "If you had only told us, Miss Brechandon, we might have assisted you in some way. What is her husband's name?"

"That I do not know; I never saw him in my life, and she spoke of him only as Johnny. But it may be she never had a husband; but I cannot believe it of 'little Annie,' who was brought up so pure and good."

"What assistance did you have for finding her?"

"Nothing but her face. I have been going up and down all the poor streets, and looking for her; it is the best I could do."

"How I hope you will find her!" said Mary.

"And I believe you will," said Kate.

Miss Brechandon stayed but a short time; but the girls thought her changed, inasmuch as she seemed more charitable and softer-hearted.

When she had gone, they retired to dream away the night, the last in the great city; but they thought silently until a late hour, each of the things nearest her own heart.

But 'Nijah, poor, disappointed 'Nijah, slept not all the night through, and the morning brought him no cheer, and the earth seemed like a great desert without one green thing to cheer his longing eyes.

## CHAPTER XX.

### A DISAPPOINTMENT.

When the girls awoke the next morning, their first thoughts were of home; and their faces shone with the pleasure such thoughts gave them.

"'Home, home, sweet, sweet home,
Be it ever so humble there's no place like home,'"

sang Mary as she raised her head from the pillow, and looked over at Hannah and Kate, who sprang up instantly and began to dress.

"For my part," said Kate, "I shall be glad to see New York fading from my vision."

"Supposing something should happen, and we couldn't go," said Mary, "I believe we should all cry like a parcel of babies. It would take considerable to keep me in this dingy place any longer. How I did dream of the country last night! you know the bluebirds have come, and the grass has begun to grow green a little, according to mother's last letter. How I do long to see the blue sky all whole! I've only seen it in pieces since October. Won't we enjoy being at home? O, won't we? and how glad everybody will be to see us; and how glad we shall be to see everybody!"

"Haven't we succeeded, after all, very materially?" said Hannah. "We have had hard times of course, and wondered what we should do next; but here we

are at last, not a cent in debt, with a few new garments, so that we shall look quite respectable, and any amount of experiences, and not a very small share of knowledge in our heads. And then we have benefited Mrs. Blossom and her boy; and Kate has sold a painting and a crayon; and I don't know but I am satisfied. What do you say, girlies?"

"We have, after all, done more than we expected," said Kate, "and considering it in that light, I am well satisfied."

"I shall be satisfied to go home," said Mary, dancing about the room. "Girls, I'm getting light-hearted. I feel almost like the Mary I was when at home, and used to have such an easy, happy time. I don't want to get old and thoughtfully sad; I want to be joyous and happy and bright, as I used to be; and I'm going to forget everything that gives me uneasiness, unless it is something I can help."

Ah! it is harder to forget than many think; but Hannah grew joyous and laughed, while she replied, —

"Do, Mary, your face already looks rosier. There are no more lessons, you know, no more drilling on the piano, no scholars to teach, and you can be gay as well as not; and I shall follow your example, only I suppose I must continue to write trash for Mr. Drew, now I have commenced, or come in as second; but I'll not write a word, sure, for two weeks now, and I want to almost forget my pen during that time."

They were all very merry; and the morning was as warm and beautiful as ever April can give. The sunbeams drifted in through the window, and fell across the little beds where they would sleep and dream no more.

When they had eaten their breakfasts, they sat

down closely together by the open window where the soft air came stealing in. There was in the street that same clatter and commotion as when they first came to the city; but so accustomed had they become to the sound that it was almost unheeded.

"Well," said Kate, "I believe, after all, we are about the same girls we were when we came; just as united, and just as determined to succeed. Once I was afraid there might be a love affair; but my fears undoubtedly all came from a surmising brain; and nobody is lost. How fortunate we have been! No one has attempted to impose on us; we have made no acquaintances of silly young men, and are the same in heart, I hope, that we were when we came."

Kate said this last in a doubtful tone, and, stopping suddenly, fell into an absent mood. Hannah and Mary did not speak; they were also busy with their own thoughts. And so for a time they sat still, thinking thoughts that they did not utter; then Kate said again, "Poor 'Nijah, I would give much to make his heart whole again; but it can't be done, and I can only hope time will heal the wound I have made."

"It will, it will," said Hannah, starting up suddenly; "but he will never be the boy 'Nijah again; yet the disappointment may make him a better man, and a greater one than he would have been without it."

"We will hope so," said Kate. "How much the past winter has furnished for thought when the summer comes, and we are at home! *Next* winter, girlies"—

"Don't, don't, Kate. I don't want to hear of next winter until we have had a little rest from what has passed. Talk about home, do," said Mary.

And so they talked and talked of home, and then went into the street to do a few errands; and finally

the expressman took their trunks away, and they found themselves all ready for departure. They were to go by steamer, and the time was five o'clock; but long before that they were ready.

"We can wait better in the boat," suggested Mary. "It is so tedious waiting here;" and so they put on their hats, and stood all ready to leave that little room forever.

"Good-by, little beds," said Mary, in a tone half joyful and half sad, "I shall never see you again, never, and indeed I cannot but be glad."

They stood in the centre of the room looking about them.

"Come, now, let us depart," said Kate, moving towards the door. She stopped suddenly, for some one knocked, and in an instant Miss Brechandon looked in. Her face was as white as the collar she wore, and she immediately commenced wringing her hands, and for an instant did not speak.

"Tell quick, quick, what is the matter," said Kate "perhaps we can help you."

"It's David De Witt," she said, breathing hard. "He is taken with one of his old sick turns; and he's been lying there all alone nearly the whole day, because he could call no one; and as I was passing by his door a short time ago, I heard a groan, and went in, and there he was, poor boy, as white as a ghost, and moaning his life away; and he kept calling 'Mary, Mary,' and if you'll believe me, I thought for a time he meant the Virgin Mary, for you know the Catholics pray to her; but finally I found out that it was this little Mary here, and she must go down and see him before she goes. I've come after her. Dear me, this is what I dreaded when his mother died. What can be done with him?"

Mary had started.

"Wait for me, girls," she said, and Hannah and Kate sat down side by side on the bed, and waited. They pitied the young man, but they believed he had no right to take Mary from them. It seemed an hour that they waited, and then they trembled, when they heard Mary's step in the hall.

She came in; and for an instant the girls held their breath, for they had never seen her face expressive of such emotions before. She did not speak, but, stepping forward, fell on her knees at the girls' feet, and, throwing either arm across their laps, dropped her face between them.

"I know what you will say," she sobbed, "and I know what a terrible disappointment it will be to you; but I must do it, I must, I must. I wanted to go home badly as you; I wanted, O so much, to hear the bluebirds sing, and see the great sky; but I can't, girls, I can't. Mr. De Witt will die without me. His mother is dead, and there's no one who loves him like — like — O girls, there is no one who will take care of him like me, and I must stay."

And so, in an instant, joy was turned into mourning.

Hannah and Kate sat motionless, as if stupefied. It was all so sudden, so unexpected; and what hurt and surprised them more than all the rest was the discovery that Mary loved the young Catholic, and therefore was lost to them, or would never be their little Mamie again.

"Mamie dear, it can't be!" Hannah exclaimed at last. "We can't leave you here. It is wrong, and it is foolishness for you to think of such a thing."

"Foolishness?" repeated Kate, "it is craziness, and I shall not allow it. Mother would not forgive

such a hasty, imprudent step. Give up the absurd notion at once, Mary, and let us go."

"Kate!" Mary lifted her head and looked steadily into Kate's flashing black eyes. "Didn't I tell you Mr. De Witt would die if I did not remain with him. I know it, I feel it, and I cannot leave him. It is my duty to remain."

"It is all because you have gone and fallen in love with him. I was once so afraid of this. How I wish we had never seen him, and rather than have this happen I would wish we had never, never seen the city of New York. I told you to be careful. I told you there was danger; but you would not believe me, and now it has come to this. Yet, if you will only give up this notion of remaining, and go home as you intended, it will all pass away, I am sure, and we shall be as happy as before. Come, Mary, think how much sorrow you are giving us. Think how father and mother will feel, how disappointed and sorry; and only think of Hannah and I going without you, and dreading to meet them at home because you are not with us. Consider, and you will surely give up this strange idea."

"Kate," said Mary earnestly, rising and standing near, "you don't appreciate my feelings. Hannah, I am sure, can understand them better. Nothing but himself could send me away from Mr. De Witt now, when he needs me so much; and I must stay. I know how disappointed you are, and I am very, *very* sorry for you and for father and mother; but I cannot go."

She looked firm and unyielding, and Kate looked at her an instant without speaking, then, dropping her face in her hands, burst into a paroxysm of tears. Hannah was already weeping, and Mary dropping again at their feet, they all wept together. Kate did

not often shed a tear, but now she wept as though her heart was breaking.

"I wouldn't feel so badly over this," she sobbed, "if I didn't feel sure that leaving you here is losing you forever. We have been so happy and so united, we three, and were to do so much, and accomplish so much, and now it is all over."

"Hannah, don't you think it is right for me to stay?" asked Mary meekly, but anxiously.

"Don't ask me, Mary, my heart is so sore and so selfish. I don't feel as though I could go home without you, and nothing looks pleasant to me any more. It has come upon us so suddenly. If we had even known you loved Mr. De Witt, we should have been better prepared."

"But I hardly knew myself," said Mary, "until I saw him so sick, and feared he would die. I tried not to love him. I tried to be careful, as you told me, Kate; but it was all to no purpose, unless it made him dearer to me. I know he is a Catholic, but he is a gentleman and a Christian, and is not bigoted, like many of his brethren. Miss Brechandon loves him like a brother, she said, and I shall stay with her, and we will have him well soon, and then I will go home."

"If Miss Brechandon loves him as a brother, why can't she take care of him as she would a brother, and let you go home with us as you ought to?" asked Kate in a sarcastic tone.

"Because she will, if I said so; but Mr. De Witt calls for me, and wants me to stay with him, and Miss Brechandon has other duties to attend to, and would not give him the tender care he needs."

"It is all because you are in love with him, Mary

and we might as well see you married to him before we go as anything else."

"And suppose I was married to him, wouldn't I be the same as now? If you love a man, marrying is not so dreadful."

"But this is dreadful, and I can't yet believe, Mary, that you are not going home with us," said Kate with a long, trembling sigh.

"But you must believe it, Kate, and please tell father and mother all about it; I know you will, Hannah, and make them feel as comfortable as you can; and tell them I will be home soon, and then we will be all the happier. It's not so very dreadful, after all. 'Nijah will be here, and I can see him often; and then I shall be with Miss Brechandon, you know, and may be we shall find 'little Annie;' and, girlies, don't worry about my musical education. I shall not give it up; I shall accomplish my object yet, be sure of that, and tell father and mother so. Tell them, too, how I want to see them, and our dear home in the beautiful country."

"We will tell them all the pleasant things that we can, Mary, be sure of that; and as you are determined to stay, I hope you will not regret it, but do much good by the means," said Hannah, wiping her eyes.

"I am so glad to hear you talk like that, and I wish Kate wouldn't feel so badly."

"Mary, how can I help it? Haven't we been brought up side by side almost from the cradle, and haven't our hopes and our plans been in common, and haven't we been almost inseparable from babyhood? We three, you and Hannah and I, how we have lived in each other, and hardly had a thought that did not pertain to each other! and haven't we said over and

over that we didn't intend to marry until we had made our mark in the world, and proved that women could do something as well as men? and now, now, like 'Nijah, I see my golden hopes melting into vapor. The chain that bound us so closely is about to be severed. Once more, Mary, Mary, will you go home with us?"

"No, no, Kate, I cannot; we never falter when we see a duty before us. But, Kate, the chain is not broken; we are the same to each other that we ever were; and in the future I will be all that you dreamed. I have only found one more to love, and you will love him too, when you know him better."

Kate groaned. "I can't go," she said, "and leave you. What will everybody say to your being engaged to a Catholic? Mary, it is heathenish."

"Don't say that, Kate," said Hannah. "We are not to be judges; and who knows but Mr. De Witt will be a liberal Protestant yet; and they say he is a Christian now."

"Yes, he is," said Mary eagerly, "and who knows?"

"O Mary, must we leave you?" said Hannah, "the youngest too. Come dear, tell Mr. De Witt that the girls won't let you stay, and then go home with us."

"Hannah, I must judge for myself, you know; and it would hardly be wise to refuse to stay because you object. I am fully decided; and as I was determined to come to New York, so I am determined to remain and care for Mr. De Witt."

"Well, then, there is no more to be said; only, Mary dear, take good care of yourself. Don't get worn with watching; and write home very often," said Hannah kindly, yet in a sorrowful tone.

"I can't be reconciled," said Kate, "and there is no use in trying. It will always be a source of deep regret to me, for there was no manner of need of such an affair's happening; but we must hope, and try at least to believe all is for the best, I suppose. Here, Mary, you must take the little money I shall have over after paying my fare home;" and Kate drew out her little worn pocket-book.

"And your trunk must be expressed back," said Hannah, "I have enough money to pay for that."

"O girlies, you are so kind to me!" said Mary, the tears again rolling down her cheeks. "Only think what a happy meeting there will be when I do go home in a short time; and we will be ourselves all the better after the little parting; but I hear Miss Brechandon stepping about uneasily at the foot of the stairs, and I know Mr. De Witt is calling for me; besides, if you would be in season for the boat, you must go now."

Mary threw her arms about Hannah and Kate, and they wept and gave each the parting embrace and kiss; and then, their arms still clasped about each other, they descended the stairs, and walked to the outer door. The bell rung violently just then. They opened the door, and there stood 'Nijah; but his face was so pale, and his eyes so swollen with weeping, he hardly looked like himself. He saw immediately that something was wrong, and he looked from one to the other inquiringly.

"'Nijah, we are going to leave Mary; she is going to stay to take care of a sick man."

It was understood by 'Nijah now, the cause of their red eyes and sorrowful looks.

With one hand he clasped Mary's, the other he laid upon Kate's arm, and said the very words which they

longed to hear, and the best words he could have uttered, —

"I will take care of her."

"'Nijah, I am sure you will be blest," said Hannah; and Kate caught his hand, and shook it heartily.

"'Nijah, be assured that you always have my sincere wishes for your good; and I shall ever be your true and lasting friend, happy if at any time I can assist you. Good-by; we leave Mary in your care."

He shook hands with them both; they passed out, and left him and Mary together.

The girls walked along silently arm in arm. They could not speak, their hearts were too full. Suddenly they met face to face with Mr. St. Maur.

"Then you are not going home to-day," he said, turning about and walking with them.

"We are on our way to the boat now," said Kate in reply.

"But Mary, where is she?"

"Not going with us," said Kate, trying to speak as if it was a matter in which they all agreed. "She will stay a few days with a sick friend."

"That is a sudden arrangement?" he said, looking keenly into the girls' faces. He seemed to read something there that forbade farther inquiries; so he said carelessly, —

"There is promise of a very fair night for going through the Sound. You'll undoubtedly have a pleasant trip home. When will you be back again?"

"When?" repeated Kate. "Perhaps never."

She spoke bitterly, for she did not feel like conversing, and could only think of Mary, Mary, at every step.

"Then you have concluded to settle down at home.

You are tired of trying to make your mark in the world."

This roused Kate.

"I hope I've got a little strength of mind and strength of purpose left, and I don't attempt things only to give them up," she said.

"*I* think she will come back again next winter; but we need rest before we think much of the future," said Hannah.

"But *you* don't intend to come back?" he asked; and Hannah's heart fluttered, and her face colored slightly, at this little interest manifested in her.

"Not to spend the winter," she said. "I hope to come here again, however; for though we have had disappointments and troubles here, New York has done much for us."

"And you go home heart-free?" This was hardly kind of Mr. St. Maur; for when he made this inquiry, he looked very hard into the girls' faces.

Hannah's heart rose higher, and beat louder; and it seemed as if it would leap to her very throat, and choke her. She felt that his keen and fascinating blue eye was fixed upon her; and she dropped her own, and was silent.

Kate, however, flashed up at him, from her great black eyes, a look of scorn and defiance.

"I presume no one will answer your question. I am sure I don't feel it my duty; and so to make us even, I will ask, Do we leave you heart-free?"

Mr. St. Maur gave a little start, and then scowled, and spoiled the beauty of his eyes; but he smiled a little bitterly soon after.

"We will consider the matter settled," he said, "and leave the question of hearts."

"To a more sentimental company," said Kate; "but I am glad we have met you, Mr. St. Maur; and I hope we shall meet you again."

"Perhaps you may stop at our place some day, and call in to see us," suggested Hannah.

"You will be welcome," said Kate.

They came to the pier of the boat, which was crowded with trucks and carriages; and so they were silent until they had entered the steamer.

Mr. St. Maur took a hand of each, and said very kindly, —

"We three shall meet again, and just one word I wish to say. You have made life seem a little fairer to me, yet I have no faith in your working up to prominence or success. Women are weak; they will banish everything for a dream of love. They will forget what they might have accomplished, in a fair prospect of marriage and support. Still I shall take an interest in watching your progress; and I shall not lose sight of you."

He pressed their hands, bowed, and before they could speak, was gone.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### MARY'S LETTER.

We must pass on a few weeks following the girls' safe arrival home; for their sadness and the disappointment of their parents on account of Mary's absence can be more vividly imagined by the reader than described by the writer.

It was May now, and the birds had begun to sing in chorus, and the grass was green, and the country growing more and more beautiful. The sky looked blue and warm, and flowers began to deck the lawns and fields, and send out faint perfumes into the air. At home everything seemed so still, and quiet, and subdued after their long stay in the noisy city. In the morning, when they opened their eyes, the sounds that greeted their ears were not the tramp of feet, or the clatter of heavy carts, but the delicious melody of the innumerable birds.

The neighbors had dropped in at odd times to hear of the city and gossip a little, and the days ended as quietly as they commenced.

Hannah went to see Dill, from whom she had received no letter since Christmas, but she found her reserved, though kind, and a dear friend still. Religion, she said, she did not wish to talk about, for her heart was as cold as a stone; and if Hannah attempted to speak on the subject, she turned her head away uneasily, and at last the subject was dropped.

Letters came often from Mary, little, loving letters, saying always Mr. De Witt was improving slowly, and how much she wanted to see them all at home; still she continued to stay in the city, and the girls waited in vain for her arrival home. At last there came a very heavy letter; and as nothing can give to the reader a clearer idea of Mary's feelings and situation, it shall be inserted here.

"My beloved Sisters,—I have not written you at length before, because I expected to be with you so soon; but something has happened now, and I cannot tell when I shall go home again. Tell it to mother carefully, and do not blame me. *I was married this morning to Mr. De Witt.* I am over twenty now, you know, and ought to be capable of choosing for myself If I had had intentions of it long, I should have written; but though I decided some time ago that I would marry him eventually, I did not know until last night that I should be married this morning. We were not married by a priest in the Catholic form, but by a Protestant minister; and Mr. De Witt never goes to a priest to get his sins pardoned, and hasn't for years.

"I know that it was a very important step to take, and I know I married entirely for love; but I believe my love was founded upon his virtues and Christian spirit; and I feel as safe and sure as if I had known him all my life. I do not feel at all as I have heard women feel after marriage, when they relinquish all aims of excellence apart from their families, and very soon forget all their accomplishments, and much of their hard-earned knowledge. I love my husband too well for that. I wish to rise with him, and grow stronger and better; and as God has given me a deep

love for music, and I hope a talent, I wish to make use of it, and bring out all there is in me, which I believe is a duty. A husband should not hinder me from this, and mine will not. We shall study together, and become united in aims and objects, as we already are in heart. I think it would have been a sin for me to have married a man who opposed my plans, and retarded my progress, as many would have done; but I have not: and now since I have some one to help and encourage me, I ought to progress more rapidly than before. I have thought of all this over and over, and I think you will come to believe like me, if you do not already. I hope, in your meditation on this important step of mine, you will not forget the independent notions we have always entertained and cultivated in regard to the doings and sayings of girls; and indeed, if we believe women can rise, and gain success as men do, we must believe that either she never was destined to do so, or else that she can do so after marriage; for marriage is a divine institution, and comparatively very few remain forever outside of it. I have not married for ease or support, for I expect neither. In fact, Mr. De Witt is a poor man, dependent on his labor entirely for sustenance; and not only this, but he is delicate in health, and is liable to become dependent. Now he has a good salary from the church and his scholars, but not much from his compositions yet. But if his health should fail him, I could support and take care of him. What better work in the world could I do?

"And now I want to tell you a little history of my doings here since you went away. I did not write it at first because I thought it would be so much pleasanter to tell it to you; but I have decided to write you all that occurs after this, and so I will begin at the

beginning. Mr. De Witt was very, *very* sick for a few days after you went away; but Saturday night he was better, and began to realize something of what had occurred. He seemed to be greatly overcome when he learned that you had gone home and left me, and that I had given up the great pleasure of seeing my friends and the country to take care of him. He looked at me with those mournful eyes of his, so full of tenderness, and gratitude, and love, that I read his heart without his uttering a word; but after that, he spoke to me such words as burned deep into my heart, and made me happy enough to forget my disappointment. I can only give you hints, and you must guess the rest.

"Sunday passed away very pleasantly and peacefully, and we talked some on the subject of religion; and I think we both learned something, and were benefited. That night I decided that if Mr. De Witt was still better, I would return home to you; but he was not, and all that week he was very sick, and I cared for him as tenderly as I could. On Sunday he was again better, and again I decided to return on Monday.

"In the morning I told him of my intention, and he turned his face away from me a moment; and when he again looked at me, he was paler than usual. 'I will not be selfish,' he said. 'Your happiness surely should be my first care now. Yes, go home to the country, and hear the bluebirds sing, and see the great blue sky. It will give me joy to think of it.' He said much more which I will not write, for it will interest no one as it did me; and it was decided that I should go home the next day. I slept very little that night, for somehow I felt uneasy and troubled;

and in the morning, when I went into Mr. De Witt's room, — for I had left it a little before midnight, — I found him much worse, so that he seemed to realize very little. Of course I could not go home that day, nor the next, for he grew no better for several days, and then he began to revive again. He improved slowly, but I dared not mention going home, and so continued to stay.

"We were engaged soon, and he gave me his mother's engagement ring, which was a diamond, and very beautiful. I thought of Kate when he slipped it on my finger; for you will remember how she always longed for a diamond ring. And so I stayed longer and longer, and did not want to go away and leave him; and last Sunday he played the organ himself, but I did not go to hear him. Somehow I did not feel like sitting through such a long and tedious service, which was so meaningless to me. And so I decided again to go home, and was to start yesterday, but it was so hard to part, because you know he is liable to be sick at any time, and he has no mother. If he had been rich and strong, I would have set our marriage day a year in the future; but he was neither, and I wished to care for him and help him; and I thought, 'Why not now as well as any time? he perhaps may never need me more;' and so we talked a long time, and tried to look at the matter in all its bearings, and do that which was wisest and best, and finally decided to be married in the morning. I longed to have you there then, and to see father and mother, and talk to them about it; but I thought it would only give them unnecessary trouble and uneasiness, and that I was the one to judge, after all, not they; and as I really thought it best and right, why not be married at once, and have the right to care for each other?

"Miss Brechandon and 'Nijah were the only witnesses to our marriage, and 'Nijah, dear boy, seemed much affected. He has been very kind to me since you went, and came every night, after his work, to ask me how I felt, and walk out with me a few blocks; for he declared it was injurious to stay in the house so much, and insisted and almost commanded me to walk with him. He sometimes brings me little bouquets, and is so kind. He has greatly improved within a few weeks, and I am not sure but he will be a great man yet; that he will be a good one, I am certain.

"Miss Brechandon has not found 'little Annie' yet; and now Mr. De Witt is better, I shall assist her in looking for her. I have not once seen or heard from Mr. St. Maur. His business in our street seems to have vanished. And now, girlies, you are just as dear to me as ever you were, and it seems just now as if you never were so dear before. It is such a natural thing to marry, you know, and almost everybody does it; so don't feel badly; and tell father and mother I am coming home soon and will bring them a dear, good son, whom I am sure they will love; and he's not much more of a Catholic than I am either; and I am sure his belief could not accord with the Catholic creed. He is quite well now, and we are going to do something grand some time. I didn't tell you that I have composed a little song, and Mr. De Witt says it shall be published; and he says too that I am just the one to compose popular music, but *he* never could; and I know the reason, because the popular ear doesn't appreciate the richest, deepest, and sweetest music in the world.

"O girlies, we are one in aim and object yet. See if I can't accomplish married what you will accomplish

unmarried; and see if we can't be just as happy as before. You will marry some time, see if you don't, when those you love propose; and then you'll not blame me.

"There is one thing to comfort our consciences and keep good our respect for ourselves and each other. I did not marry for riches or honor. You surely can find no fault with my motives, for you can see plainly that they were disinterested and pure.

"We live to do good, and I saw a way clearly before me wherein I could do much good, and be happy in doing it; and I am not sorry, but O how rejoiced, that I faltered not.

"And now, dearies, adieu. We will be home soon for a few days, and you must be happy in thinking of me as satisfied, when I could not have been otherwise.

"Love has done it all, and if you feel like censuring, censure love alone, and be sure you will soon bow to its sovereign will. Read this to father and mother, and explain all to them; and say that I love them as dearly as ever, and do not believe I have done anything that dishonors them. Tell them I knew what would be their answer, had I asked their consent to marry. They would have written me much kind and good advice, which, without hearing, I have followed; and then they would have said, 'You must decide for yourself in this matter, for you know more about the case than we; but think well before you take the important step; and always you are the same dear child to us, whether married or single.' Isn't that what they would have said? I know it is, and I did think well, and believe I have done the best way; so rejoice with me on my wedding-day, and think that you have not lost a sister, but gained a brother.

"Dear girlies, the good Father will keep us safe, and I am always, under all circumstances,

"Your affectionate MARY."

Hannah and Kate read this letter over and over, and cried and dreamed over it, and at last committed most of it to memory. There was no way for them, after this, but to be resigned, and they tried hard to learn resignation.

Sitting under an old apple-tree, where the birds were singing joyously, they talked of the letter and of Mary.

"I am so anxious to see the dear little thing," said Hannah, "that it takes away some of my disappointment; and, Kate, really I believe it is better to be well married and settled than to be all the time thinking of a beau, and trying to please him, and having lovers' quarrels; and Mr. De Witt is a lovable man, and now I think of him as being so dear and near to Mary, he grows dearer to me; and you know, as Mary says, nearly every one marries some time; and to marry the one we really love must be the greatest happiness on earth."

"We might as well talk that way," said Kate, leaning her elbow on Hannah's knee, "and it's you and I now, Hannah. But I shall now be always looking for your wings, with which you will fly away and leave me a lone 'old maid.'"

"They will never grow, Kate, I feel sure of that; you will go first. I am plain and odd, and, if I love at all, shall love some one far above me; that is my way. I couldn't love an ordinary man."

"An ordinary man is beneath you, Hannah; so you must marry a man more than ordinary, to be your equal, and you will."

Hannah shook her head.

"No, I will not," she said. "Didn't I tell you I was to be a model 'old maid' for a sample? The world needs one badly; not but that there are many noble women who never marry, but they generally don't entertain quite the right ideas; and most of them shrink from telling their age. I never will, for I've as good right to grow old as any one; and I hope to be proud of my years because of what I have accomplished in them."

"I shall follow close after," said Kate; "but who would have thought last fall, when we were preparing for New York, that when Mary came back, she would bring a husband."

"And we must learn to bear all disappointments like brave women," said Hannah, "remembering always that the future may bring us something of which we have never dreamed; for —

'The drift of the Maker is dark,
An Isis hid by the veil.
Who knoweth the ways of the world,
How God will bring them about.'"

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE REVIVAL.

THE breezes were cool and enlivening, the sunset a picture of sublimity and beauty, sending over the whole firmament gleams of sunlight dyed in every color of the rainbow. The katydids talked to each other across the road, the crickets sang loudly and wailingly in their hidden nooks, for a beautiful September day was dying. Forever coming and going are the days wherein men may labor, bringing us nearer and nearer to the night wherein work ceaseth; and that night we know not whether it is near or far.

Through the long green clover-field, on toward the little church, Hannah and Kate wended their way, with arms clinging together and eyes fixed on the radiant sunset, above which lay a faint purple cloud bordered with gold; and their ears were open to the brisk whispers of the breezes, and the mournful songs of the insects.

The bell was ringing in the quaint little steeple on the old church; and its every stroke seemed at the same time joyful and sad, hopeful and hopeless.

Not before, since that sad parting in New York, have we seen my brave young girls; and the summer has all passed away. If you look at them closely, you will see that their faces are sadder and graver than in the days past in which we knew them; and they walk on

silently, — on and on, step by step, through the clover-field. Kate's eyes seem larger and darker, and her form taller than of old, while her cheek is no longer flushed with that fresh, bright hue which added so much to the animation and beauty of her face.

Her long, tedious winter in New York, and at last her parting with Mary, had left her worn and weary, and somewhat disconsolate.

She had hardly been herself during the summer. Everything reminded her of the fair young sister with whom she had expected to walk for years to come, and from which fond dream she had been so rudely awakened.

Mary's visits to the sweet cool home of her childhood — for twice had she been there since her marriage — brought to Kate in a certain way resignation ; for Mr. De Witt was a most estimable and lovable young man, and won their hearts by his kindness, and especially by his devotedness and tender solicitude toward his young wife ; while Mary's happiness, contentment, and satisfaction relieved those who so tenderly loved her of all fears for her future. And her wonderful improvement in music, the little songs she had composed, and which had been received by the public with some appreciation, kept the hope bright in the hearts of her friends that her musical talent, which she loved above all things, was not destined to be hid in a napkin, and forever lie unimproved.

Yet Kate, even since she and Hannah had talked themselves into the belief that it was better thus, that Mary's opportunities were increased since marriage, still continued to feel a void in her heart, a something wanting, though she could not tell what nor wherefore.

How bitter it is, this first breaking in upon a clinging

group of loved ones, who feel that they belong exclusively together; whose secrets, hopes, and longings are in common; who know each other as well, aye, and sometimes better than they know themselves; who are one little happy group, all so genuine in their affection and sympathy, all so anxious for each other's safety, and all so happy in each other's society! Yet from just such families should others be formed; from just such homes should others spring. Those who make each other happy at their father's hearth, will make a precious group happy at their own. Those who cling together fondly and affectionately, dreading a separation, and dreaming of ways to help each other, are they who cling to a husband with devoted tenderness, and become mothers loyal and saintly.

And so the old home nest will be forsaken, the birdlings will fly away, for thus hath the Maker of all things decreed; and it is well.

Mary's marriage was sudden and strange. Yet it was not rash nor desperate, nor yet entered into for the attainment of worldly gain or honor.

With Mary, to love was to care for, and to help. She knew no other love; and when she plainly saw that the object of her affection needed her to make his path smoother and his days brighter, as well as her material care and watchfulness in his hours of sickness, she did what she believed right, and her right to do, and joined her life with his. And now with the partner of her days she goeth; and though she is the same dear sister still, and the same affectionate daughter and friend, yet a wife's duties are upon her; and she hath an altar of her own around which to gather home joys and comforts; but Mary was not the one to hide her talents, because she had taken upon herself the duties

and responsibilities of wifehood. She conscientiously believed that whatever talents God gave to her it was her duty to cultivate and extend as far as possible, for the sake of her own advancement and elevation, as also for the good she would unavoidably do to humanity; besides, she loved music too well to abandon it; and now with a double purpose she worked on.

Hannah had not grieved so much as Kate over Mary's marriage. She had known even a keener disappointment than this; besides, she could appreciate Mary's affection for her husband; and in thinking of her as happy, she grew content herself, and came even to be glad that the gentle girl she had loved so well and so devotedly, had found a true heart on which to lean and in which to trust.

Neither she nor Kate, however, had accomplished what they had hoped during the summer. Their severe winter in the city, the first material hardships they had ever known, had left mind and body both somewhat exhausted; and now, as the invigorating autumn weather came, and they had begun to feel again ambitious, a religious excitement occurred which confused and unfitted them for the labor which they were preparing for.

Every afternoon and evening for a week the little church had been crowded even to the outer door by people who flocked there from the village, and from all parts of the town. Never had such an excitement been known in the parish before; and talented ministers from other churches assisted in the great work which was going on. Kate especially, who was yet hardly physically strong, had been greatly moved. Her mind had been so wrought upon that she tried in vain to think clearly as before, and she failed to

feel that faith and trust which had been hers in the days gone by. Hannah, too, who had reasoned so much on religion, who had so satisfactorily expressed herself to Miss Brechandon on creeds and churches, began to doubt, to feel herself thrust out into chaos, with nothing to cling to, and no voice to hear her call.

The old and young were weeping and wringing their hands, while prayer and exhortation were heard almost continually throughout the village. Hannah and Kate had heard little revival preaching before, and, possessing naturally a religious turn of mind, they sometimes listened with fear and trembling. This beautiful autumn night they were unusually sad and thoughtful, and walked on silently, hearing the voices of thoughtless lads on the church lawn, and seeing people hurrying along the road. Suddenly, as they left the clover-field, and drew nearer the meeting-house, the singing of a familiar hymn was borne to them, in a perfect tumult of voices, so loud, and full, and enthusiastic, it seemed as if the heavy timbers of the church must be moved by the great noise. The girls stopped just a moment and listened. Clearly the words of the last verse were borne to them on the evening air.

"Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.
I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die."

Both shuddered a little, and then they hurried on. Around the outer door of the church was a knot of rude boys, munching peanuts, and making fun for

themselves out of the very seriousness of others. They stepped a little one side, and remained hushed and silent, as Hannah and Kate walked into the church, their faces grave and white, and a certain something in their clear eyes which commanded respect. There was a little stir in the room when they entered; for they had been well known throughout the neighborhood as girls with very decided opinions of their own, and people were curious to see how this religious excitement would affect them. Every evening for a week they had been to the church, and sat silent and grave all through the services; and they had been gazed at with expectant eyes, and some began to wonder if they were not getting serious; but they expressed their feelings to none but themselves, and even together they talked less than usual. The man who was to preach this night was a powerful revivalist, known in many religious communities; a man with a powerful frame and firm step, with gray hair, and a keen, fascinating eye. His voice was deep and penetrating, and he had the power of impressing the hearer that every word of his was law and gospel. The girls had never heard him before, and everything was forgotten while he preached, but the pictures he so vividly presented to their imagination. He first pictured the condition of a lost soul after death. He painted hell in the most frightful colors imaginable, borrowing perhaps something from Milton's great imagination. The room was as still as death, and many held their breath and closed their eyes to shut out the vision of the awful pit which seemed to yawn before them.

It was terrible, and Kate gave a little gasp and clutched at Hannah's dress.

If the words of the preacher were true, then they

should fall into this terrible pit; she and Hannah, who had always tried to do well, and whose faces shone with the innocence in their hearts,—if they did not go forward and be born again, regenerated, and baptized. "Now," said the preacher, when he had presented this horrifying picture, "grace is free; Jesus loves you, and calls you, and has for you in heaven a mansion as glorious and beautiful as hell is terrifying, where He will receive those who are not ashamed of Him. There is no time to be lost; to-night may be your last opportunity. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Give your heart to Jesus now, it is all He asks. Grieve not away the Holy Spirit which is striving with you, else you may be lost forever and ever and ever." Much more he said in the same exciting strain; and tender young maidens, who had hardly known a sinful thought, began to grow pale with fright, wrought upon by the eloquent preacher until they had no thought or feeling calm and unprejudiced, and belonging to their own individual hearts and brains, but were borne away into thoughts confused and filled with terror.

Hannah and Kate were suddenly startled by a gasp and despairing groan coming from the pew in front of them, and noticing for the first time its occupants, they saw that they came from Dill, whose face was as pale as death, and who was writhing in anguish.

The house was now crowded to the very utmost, and the feeling was becoming intense. When the preacher called upon them to rise for prayers, or come forward to the anxious seat, many did so; but Dill sat still, and sobbed and groaned, and hid her face on the shoulder of some one beside her, who tried, but in vain, to soothe her. Hannah and Kate had never felt so

wrought upon before. Still they sat quietly side by side, their faces grave and pale, while they tried to think clearly. The meeting was over at last, and they drew a long sigh of relief; and Hannah touched Dill gently on the shoulder.

"Go with us," she said; and Dill, looking up, answered almost wildly, —

"I don't care where I go, for I'm lost, lost forever. There's no hope for me."

Some of Hannah's old reason returned to her.

"If you are lost, Dill, be sure there will not a soul in this congregation be saved; and if everybody is going to hell, we might as well go with them. I'm not afraid of any one's being lost, however, who loves the good and hates the bad, and tries to do as well as she can."

"But I don't love the good. I hate God, and I'm lost forever," exclaimed Dill in a half shriek, that called the attention of many to herself. One of the ministers, who was standing near, heard it, and approached them.

"My young friend," he said, "you must pray for pardon, and it will be granted you. The evil spirit has got the power over you, and you must strive to overcome it."

He tried to explain to her something about grace and forgiveness; but he did not know that what the child most needed was a gentle hand to wipe her tears away, and a soothing voice to sing even a sweet lullaby to her in a quiet room, wherein no sound of terrible warning could come; that her greatest needs just then were physical strength and endurance; for her form was thin, and her young face almost transparent, and her mind had been worked upon already too much.

Dill had no mother, and her father was a deacon of the stiffest and sternest order. Dill was his only child, and his greatest desire had ever been to see her a member of the church; but, poor, deluded man! like many another, he did not know the secret of bringing about his desired object, and was always holding up to his young daughter, whose health was delicate, the necessity of belonging to the church, and the terrible consequences that would accrue to those who would not confess Christ before the world. Dill, who believed that some great change must come into her heart, could not feel that change, and therefore fell into that terrible state of thinking she was lost forever.

Her mother before her had suffered much in the same way, though the trouble was less apparent; for the religion of her strong, unyielding husband was too severe for a slender, trusting little woman like herself, and she seemed much like a caged bird; for many of the innocent amusements and enjoyments of life were denied her. But she had gone early into the mysterious world for which her husband had tried to prepare her; and at last, when the end came, she exclaimed with a face radiant with new joy, "I am free, I am free."

Dill was an infant then, and had grown up motherless, and under the guidance of her stern father. For more than a year she had been troubled on the question of religion, and that peace for which she longed did not come to her. At first she had striven hard, and prayed for peace and pardon, and that change of heart which she was taught was necessary to the saving of her soul; but they did not come, and she could not join the church without them.

So the days went by; Hannah and 'Nijah went

away, and she began to grow cold and indifferent until the revival broke out, when she became excited and wretched again. She was a retiring, bashful girl, and therefore had lived in a most secluded manner, with only a few friends, and much time to brood over the terrible condition of her soul; while most of her books were of that class which only frightened her.

"Come, Dill," said Hannah at last, "there is no religion in this sort of thing. It is enough to drive any one crazy; besides, it is suffocating in here. Come out into the open air, where we can breathe and think."

The minister looked hard at Hannah as though she was in a most pitiable condition; then saying to Dill, "I will call and see you to-morrow," walked away, while Hannah drew Dill's hand under her arm, and they made their way out of the church.

"There!" exclaimed Hannah when they were beneath the clear, starry sky. "Now I can breathe, and I hope after a while to get my brain clear enough to think."

"It *is* reviving out here," said Dill with a loud breath, which terminated in a sob.

"I want you to go home with me to-night," said Hannah; "will you?"

"If father is willing," said the poor child; and so they went and asked for the deacon's consent, but he would not give it.

Dill must go home with him, he said, for he wished to talk with her; besides, Mr. B——, one of the ministers, would call on her in the morning, and he wished her to be ready to receive him.

Dill groaned and clung to Hannah's arm; but she did not ask her to go with her to her own home, for the stern face of her father forbade it.

So Hannah and Kate, arm in arm, went through the clover-field alone.

"What do you think will become of us all?" asked Kate with a long sigh, as they walked along.

"I am really afraid Dill will lose her reason," said Hannah. "I have heard of such things happening, and she has no time to rest from these superstitious thoughts and feelings, for her father keeps them constantly before her. I wish she could go away somewhere, and find a little rest."

"I wish we could all rest awhile," said Kate. "What do you think about this revival, Hannah?"

"I don't get opportunity to think clearly."

"Well, don't you remember how happy we used to be in our own religion, as we used to call it, and how we used to enjoy talking on the subject, and trying to do just as nearly right as we knew how? Do you suppose that was all conceit and folly in us? It seems to me we must have been innocent and sincere; and if we were, what a pity that we must awaken into such a reality as this! If I could feel as some express themselves, so gloriously happy, because forgiven, then I should undoubtedly be content; but somehow I can't bring myself to believe in this great outburst of emotion, which I fear, in great part, is physical excitement."

"Yet it may do good," said Hannah, who, since she had seen Dill so overcome, had roused herself in part out of the strange state into which she had fallen. "No doubt it will cause people who were before entirely heedless of eternity, to think of their souls, and of immortal life; and I hope it will make them better and nobler. Yet this cannot be in itself religion, it seems to me, nor the true way to worship and love our Creator."

They were now at their own door. Hannah lifted the latch, and they entered the warm, cozy kitchen, where they expected to find their father and mother sitting quietly, for they never attended these meetings, but day after day sowed good seed without noise or confusion, having a prayer for all good constantly in their hearts. But this night the rays of the lamp-light shone out from the sitting-room, and the girls stopped a moment and wondered who was their visitor; for that there was one, they were certain. They entered the sitting-room curiously, and immediately recognized, in the handsome, white-haired gentleman who smiled upon them so kindly, Mr. Worth, whom the winter before they had met in New York. They greeted him with great cordiality, for somehow his cheerful face affected them pleasantly, and revived their drooping spirits. They did not know then how much they would owe him in after years, nor guess how fervently they should bless him in the future. Why cannot the world provide more men like unto him? Why cannot the wealthy learn how wealth will make them happy? Why will they use it so to their own injury and also to the injury of others? Why will they not imitate the example of this noble man, whose days were days of pleasantness, and whose paths were paths of peace?

Who can measure the value of a man, possessed of all worldly honor and riches, who gathers around him friends of worth, whether rich or poor; who stands among all the briers and underbrush of life tarnished by none of his surroundings, stately and independent, like the graceful lily that rises in rough pasture land, free from the evil influences about it; who will not stoop to the least dishonesty, neither by the allurements

of gold nor of fashion; who wavers not in doing right, however great may be the tendency to do wrong; whose standard of right is in his own bosom, making him independent of all creeds, sects, and communities, and dependent for his convictions only upon God? Only He who made him can measure his worth; and his heroism exceeds all other in the world.

Such a man was Mr. Worth. Radical in his principles, devoted to his Master Christ, whom he loved with all the faith and fervency of a child, he was as sure of finding a happier existence after death as he was sure of anything he had seen and known. Yet there was no effeminacy about him, either of mind or of body; but he was strong physically and mentally, and he devoted that strength with the most charming cheerfulness to doing good. He never indulged in personal extravagances, yet lived always in the most comfortable and becoming manner; and all around, both far and near, hearts blessed him, — hearts which had been comforted by his timely assistance; and not a little was the intellectual worth of the world increased by his encouragement and material help. No one but God is faultless; but the faults of Mr. Worth were so hedged in and overbalanced by his virtues, that if they were at any time apparent, they were forgiven and forgotten.

In after years it was often the delight of Hannah and Kate to talk of his goodness, and contrast him with the many rich men of whom they knew, and who used their wealth as chains to bind them into slavery, which not only was a hindrance to their natural enjoyment, but bound their souls in poisonous fetters; and they learned a lesson from this good man who used his wealth and his talents for eternal good.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### HOPE AND PEACE.

"THIS revival is affecting you?" said Mr. Worth inquiringly the next morning, as he sat with Hannah and Kate under the apple-tree at the foot of the lawn. He spoke especially to Kate; and she replied honestly, —

"Yes, sir, it is affecting almost every one; but somehow I cannot go forward, like many of the other young ladies, for I don't feel exactly that way. I can't tell really what is the state of my feelings; but I am sure I am not so happy as I was before the revival commenced."

"And how is it with you, Hannah?" he asked.

"I am thinking," she said, "and trying to find light, for it seems as if it is all at once dark."

"I don't know that I have anything to say against the revival," said Mr. Worth. "I believe in reviving all that is good in us as often as possible; and these great religious excitements, which are intended for the salvation of souls from perdition, undoubtedly produce some good results; but they are gradually passing away, and people are learning, little by little, a better way to worship God than by this shouting and praying, and a more acceptable way to render service unto Him."

"But," said Hannah, "they tell us at the church

that we must confess Christ before the world, and experience religion, if we would be saved, otherwise there is no hope for us."

"And they tell you the truth," answered Mr. Worth earnestly.

"Then why are not revivals real necessities," asked Kate, "since people must be lost if not brought into the church somehow, and hadn't it better be through fear than in no way?"

"I said that they tell the truth when they say we must confess Christ before the world, and experience religion if we would be saved; but what is it to confess Christ? How would you do it?"

"Well, I suppose what they mean by the words is that we shall stand up before all the people, and tell them our determination to be a Christian, and say that we love Jesus, and wish to be a member of the church;" said Hannah.

"There is undoubtedly no harm in that, when the person is sincere, neither is there any necessary good in it. The way I should define the confessing of Christ would be in quite a different way; and my explanation of experiencing religion would probably differ somewhat from the people of your church."

"Please tell us what you think about it," said Hannah eagerly. "Kate and I have been to meeting so often of late that we have hardly had time for clear thinking; and you have lived many years, and lived them well, professing Christianity, and undoubtedly can help us."

"My brain feels a little steadier already," said Kate, a touch of the old expression coming back into her face.

Mr. Worth smiled pleasantly.

"Yes," he said, "I have professed to be a follower of Christ for many years, and have tried to be a true disciple. His doctrines are perfect, and his life was more beautiful than anything of which we have ever heard; and no imagination of beauty and perfection can exceed it. It is a joy to me to try to follow in his footsteps; and one who does not believe on Him and love Him, which is to do his work, can have no idea of the joy in a Christian's life nor of the hope in the Christian's heart. And now there is nothing so easy or so beautiful as to become a Christian, and there is no other way in all the world to be truly good, to live a truly noble life, but by Christianity. If a person denies Christ, and then boasts of morality and goodness, you may be sure he possesses not that pure and elevated feeling, that humble greatness, that love and respect for the human soul, that broad philanthropy, that marks the life of the true believer in and follower of Christ. There is nothing so easy, I said, as to become a Christian; but I must add, when the heart and soul long for elevation, for the beauties of goodness, as I am sure yours do. You need go to no revival, for there you will be confused and almost incapable of true worship; there you cannot see clearly, but a mist seems to obscure the clear vision of holiness; but you love all that is good and true, and desire to be better and grow better daily: and you think of this often, but not at the revival; there you can only tremble with fear. While you sit here, however, beneath this clear sky, you feel a calm, pleasant love for God, and a deep gratitude for his goodness; or if not this morning, you have many mornings before; and you desire to do the will of Christ and follow his example. Isn't that true?"

"Yes, yes," exclaimed both of the girls at one time.

"Then it is not necessary that you bind yourself to any particular sect, since the times are so entirely changed from the days of Christ and the Apostles. Now there are numerous Christian churches and creeds, all faulty and all with their merits. Now surely the joining of one of these churches is not necessary to the saving of your souls; but if after due consideration and reason, not in excitement and fear, you believe you could further the real beauties and doctrines of Christ by becoming a member of some church, it would probably be well for you to unite with some religious body; if you do not, if you think you can draw nearer to your Heavenly Father and all humanity, and be in spirit a member of all that is good and true in every church and every community in the world, by being free, then it were better to remain free, and you will confess Christ just as truly. To confess Christ is to show to the world that you love Him, by obedience to his will, and following in his footsteps. It is all the confession that He asks for, and it is left with us to decide what way we can best do this. It is the weaker natures which are only brought to what is called the experiencing of religion through a selfish fear of being lost without it; and the higher natures that rise above all fear, and elevate their souls, and rise nearer and nearer to God, by doing good deeds, by keeping their hearts meek and humble, by loving humanity, and working to lift human nature nearer the divine, — these hearts are full of that beautiful religion which makes heaven so beautiful and earth like unto it. Reason would not have been given us, if it was not to be made use of: the brute creation

have only instinct; and does not reason tell us, as well as the Gospel, that it is the work and the heart which must be acceptable to God? and though we must exhort each other to good works, it must not be through a great religious excitement, when the good works held out to the convert are to confess Christ, and subscribe to a certain creed; for true religion is as gentle and calm as the sky above us."

"O Mr. Worth," exclaimed Hannah, "you bring back to me those delightful, peaceful thoughts I used to know; and it seems as if the light never shone so clearly on my heart as now, nor religion seemed so beautiful."

"I feel," said Kate, her eyes growing luminous with feeling, "I feel rested, and ready to commence work for the good of my own soul and the souls of all the world. There is so much to do, and so much to be joyful for, and so little to fear, when we do what is right and work for those around us."

Mr. Worth seemed greatly pleased.

"We will not condemn the revival," he said, "but will hope it will do much good for those who cannot see above it; but *we* may be Christians without it; we see the fatherhood of God and the beauties of Christ, and will not get entangled in theology, but draw nearer and nearer to our great Teacher, through the elevation of our souls, and the overcoming of our animal propensities. We will not seek the shield of a religious body, which is more or less governed by popularity; and though we condemn not the churches, and hope they may become more and more liberal and purified, yet Christ is our church, the world our country, and all humanity our brethren. By precept and example, we will renounce everything that degrades humanity, and work unceasingly for that which is true and elevating."

"What enjoyment there must be in such a life," said Hannah, "and how peaceful must be its close."

"How much you must have thought, and how earnest you must have been," said Kate, "to bring yourself into this delightful state!"

"My wife deserves much credit for all the good which is developed in me," said Mr. Worth reverently. "If you could have known her, my good girls, you could better than now, perhaps, realize the beauty of a true Christian; but there are other examples, those which you have known since infancy, and there is no reason why you should not rise very near to the kingdom of heaven, even before you go hence."

"I feel as if there was a great load taken from my heart," said Kate, a shade of color coming into her face.

"This religion is just the kind Dill needs," said Hannah, "and she will never be happy with any other. I wish she could feel as we do."

"Go, and tell her how you feel, and talk with her; then perhaps she may see more clearly," said Mr. Worth.

And Hannah went, almost running across the fields; and for more than an hour she talked with the excited and unhappy girl, until her eyes looked clearer, and her face brighter, than for many a day.

"If father would only talk as you do," she said, "I should be happy; but he spoils all of my delightful thoughts, and makes religion seem so stiff and frightful that I cannot embrace it as he desires me to."

"You must try and have individual thoughts," said Hannah, "and use a little of your own reason. No deacon or minister should reason for us. They may

often assist us, but we must think and act for ourselves."

Hannah and Kate after this began to feel better and happier, and their ambition began to return. They did not attend any more of the meetings, but spent their evenings in quiet conversation with Mr. Worth, who continued a week at the farm-house.

Their father and mother were greatly pleased to see their daughters again the happy girls they were in the past, and there had not been so much life and enjoyment before in the quiet home since Mary's marriage.

One night, when the girls had retired to their room, they both seemed in unusually exuberant spirits.

"Dear me!" said Kate, "I have got the greatest news," and she sat down in a chair and rubbed her hands together gleefully, — "the very greatest news," she continued, "and I'm almost at a loss whether to think it isn't a fairy story that I have dreamed, and not a reality."

"I can half guess what it is," said Hannah in a most lively tone, "as I have some news to tell also, and I suppose it is the same kind. Kate, I haven't felt so bright and joyous before since Mary was with us, as I do to-night; but tell your news quickly, so that I can tell mine."

"Well, Mr. Worth — was there ever such a good man? — talked to me a long, long time, you know when, and found out in his own excellent way just what I desired to do; and O, Hannah, he is going to help me. I am going to study with an artist, just as I have desired to do so long, and not be all the time worried about paying my way; and won't I advance? and I'll pay him, if in no other way, by my success. If Mr. Worth could know what hours of anxiety he

has saved me, and how his assistance will hasten me on toward the goal for which I work; if he could understand what days of menial labor and nights of wakefulness his timely aid will rid me of, he could comprehend something of how much I thank and bless him. I am willing to work and endure hardships; but it is hard to spend the precious time for menial labor which I long to devote to art, and one must be so slow in rising when she has neither influential friends nor money; but tell me, Hannah, what is your good news? Something similar to mine, I am sure."

"Yes, something similar to yours, Kate," said Hannah, "but your good luck alone would have made me content. Mr. Worth is not the man to condemn and then render no assistance. He told me he thought it very wrong to use my powers to add to that literature which is not elevating, but rather debasing, and he thought me capable of benefiting humanity with my pen, and he is going to help me to do it. Through his influence and assistance I shall do better, and I hope the days of my sensational writing are over. Kate, do you suppose we deserve this good luck?"

"Doubtful," answered Kate, "but I hope we may some time become worthy of this wonderful blessing. If Mary were here to enjoy it!"

"But she shall enjoy it some time; and come, Kate, we cannot sleep until we have told father and mother."

So they crept softly down the old stairs, and into their parents' room, where the story was told in half whispers, and Mr. Worth blessed with most earnest and sincere blessing.

The next morning, when the girls began to wake to consciousness, an exceedingly pleasant sensation stole over them, though why, they could not at first realize;

but suddenly, when they had opened their eyes and beheld the flood of autumn light with a pink mist floating through it, they remembered their friend, and how bright and glowing he had made their future appear. He was to leave them that day, and they hastily made their toilets and went down to the bright sitting-room, where they found him engaged in reading quietly from a diamond edition of Whittier, which he carried in his pocket. It was yet quite early, and they had but just passed the usual compliments of the morning, when they heard a timid knock out on the porch; and looking out through the long kitchen, Hannah saw Dill peering in at the door with a crimson hood on her head that heightened the glow of her cheeks, which the morning air and her own excitement had made radiant and charming. She beckoned to Hannah, who immediately joined her.

"Why, Dill," she said, "what does it mean that you are over here so early?"

"Because I am so happy," Dill replied, "and the world never looked so beautiful to me before; and I am going to try and do some good, and not be always whining for fear I shall be lost, but go to work and save myself." They stood alone on the shady porch, and Dill talked under her breath. "I could hardly go to sleep last night," she continued, "I was so very happy, and religion seems so delightful; and do you know, after meeting was over last night, father brought me a letter from 'Nijah, and it is the most charming letter." Saying this, Dill immediately produced a letter from under her shawl, which she gave eagerly into Hannah's hands. "To think," she said, "that he should think of me like that, when he is so noble and I so insignificant!" and Dill pointed to a portion of the letter which ran thus: —

"I think of you often, Dill, and somehow, the longer I stay away, the more you come into my mind, and your kind words often come to me when I get lonesome. You'll think I am changed when you see me, but I hope it's for the better."

"It couldn't be for the better," suggested Dill. "I wish I could be half as good and noble as 'Nijah is; and I'm going to try; and I'm not going to be such a trouble to father any longer, nor to any of my friends; but I shall be a Christian, if possible."

Hannah finished the reading of 'Nijah's letter, and she smiled a very wise smile, which, however, Dill did not notice, but took the precious missive, and hid it under her shawl again. "Now I must go home," she said; "I only came in for a moment, for I knew you would be so glad to see me happy. I suppose it is almost a miracle that I am so changed. I don't know what else it can be."

"It isn't at all necessary to know," said Hannah, "only what we are sure of, and that is, that it came from Heaven, from whence all good comes. Dill, my dear, I have dreamed of the time when your face would glow like this; and I am very, *very* glad the reality has come. Did you go to meeting last night?"

"No, I couldn't; but I shall go to-night, to see if I can't be calm and happy all the way through. Did you hear about Maurice Pike?"

"No, what?"

"He has 'come out' in religion, and acts as different as ever you saw; and they say Sally is serious."

"I am glad of it," said Hannah; "I hope they will be better and happier for it."

"So do I; but I must go home, for I am going to commence this morning, you know, to be sensible and

good; and I'm going to be different with father, more of a companion if I can. Good-by;" and Dill ran down the steps, and off through the field, her heart as light as her step.

"Joys cluster," Hannah said to herself, thinking of Mary.

"Now," said Mr. Worth a few hours later, when he was about to leave them, "now, girls, if I leave as much joy with you as I carry away with me because of the assistance I am to render you, I leave you with happy hearts."

"You may be assured of that," said Hannah; "and besides that, you have taken such a load from our shoulders that we might easily fly, if light-heartedness was *only* necessary; but if there can be a more joyful time than this for us, it will be when we repay you for your great kindness."

"Feel under no obligations," said Mr. Worth; "my assistance to you is less personal than general; by assisting you, I hope not only that you may be personally benefited, but that you may benefit others, and make the world better. Wherever I find one, especially a girl (whose path to success is much more thorny than a boy's), striving to attain some worthy object, and I know her heart is philanthropic, I feel it a duty as much as lieth in me to assist her to rise, and be what a woman should be, strong in principle, and free from the slavery of fashion, cultivating her talents so that through her the world may receive more or less good." Ah! many a woman could testify that his duty was well performed, since not a little good influence exerted in family, community, and even nation, was all owing to his encouragement and help.

When he had gone, the girls began to make prep-

arations for work; for a heavy barrier had been lifted from their path, and having their hearts at rest on religious matters, they determined to push on and accomplish as much as their talents would allow; and they declared that Mr. Worth seemed like an angel sent to them just at the moment when they most needed him.

Angels seldom fail to appear to the good and persevering, though not always in the same form; and there is no such word as fail for those who falter not.

"Be quiet. Take things as they come:
Each hour will draw out some surprise.
With blessing let the days go home:
Thou shalt have thanks from evening skies."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### TWO LETTERS.

A LETTER now and then helps a person along so much in telling a story, that I shall insert these two which I hold in my hand, written by Hannah and Kate confidentially to each other.

Winter had gone, every day of it, and March had just been ushered in, when Kate's letter was brought to the old farm-house, and laid on Hannah's lap.

Kate had been all the winter in New York, studying hard, and Hannah had been quietly at home, writing. They had made a practice of writing to each other very long and very confidential letters; and from a very large bundle I have selected these two, which, though they may not be written as smoothly and elegantly as some of the others, are more to the point, and more descriptive, and therefore better answer my purpose.

"DEAR HANNAH, — There is so much to get into this letter that I hardly know where to commence. If I only had wings, I would drop my pen, and fly to you, and find father and mother sitting quietly before a bright fire, — for it's a cold night, — and give them a little surprise.

"You see I think of them more and more, and appreciate them better and better.

"But if I had the wings, I shouldn't have the bodily form, and therefore might not be recognized, nor understood half so well as a letter will be. I don't want to get into a 'sober strain,' as we used to tell about; but somehow most I have to write has a 'sober strain' to it. But then that's delightful about Mary, isn't it? The boys have begun to whistle her song in the street; and she has made a heap of money out of the simple little thing. You see Mary has tact; and you know there's a great deal in that.

"Now David never will make much out of his compositions, they are not sprightly enough to 'take' with the people; but he is a 'capital' teacher and organist, and is being appreciated too. Ever since he left the Catholics, and took that offer of Dry's in Blank Church, Brooklyn, he has received more notice; and he has an enormous price for his scholars; but then his health isn't reliable, and Mary quite often takes his place at the organ; and she plays beautifully too. I always go to church there when she plays, I suppose because I am so proud of her; and I keep thinking, while I hear the music, of her little white fingers running over the keys; and then besides, as you well know, no music sounds so sweet to me as our Mary's.

"She and David have grand callers sometimes, and Mary, you know, has got tact as I said, or else she never would get along so well as she does, brought up with our simple ways.

"The other day, for instance. Mr. B——, the great musician, called, and Mary was in such a flutter of excitement. I thought at first she would surely do no credit to herself; but her tact saved her, though I think her pretty face had something to do with it. Just now David isn't at all well; and Mary gives him

all her attention at such times, so I am left quite alone. I have written you so much about my progress that there isn't much more just now to tell, only of Mr. C—— the artist's kindness. I can hardly understand why he takes so much interest in me, unless it is because of his friendship for Mr. Worth. It's always Mr. Worth, you know, with us, because what should we do without him?

"I went to the party to which I wrote you I had an invitation.

"No one was there that I knew, but the artist and Mr. St. Maur, who, by the way, is a friend of Mr. C——'s, and comes into the studio quite often. I don't like parties very well; but this I suppose was a very select and superior one; and as my picture had just been accepted at the Academy of Design, I could have enjoyed anything then, even that detestable 'ball.' But I was treated very politely, and actually had a little chat with a distinguished artist who has just returned from Rome, and became quite infatuated with a young lady amateur. I mean that *I* became infatuated, not the artist; he, I believe, has a wife and several children; but none of them were present.

"The young lady amateur called to see me this morning. I like her, and believe it is the first lady acquaintance I have made in New York with whom I could start a congenial friendship, though I have met several very fine women, — Mr. C——'s wife, for instance, and his sister also.

"Adonijah, or Mr. Dyke, as he is more frequently called here, keeps very busily at work; but I see him now and then; and we are the best of friends. I think if our starting for New York so oddly did no other good, it will prove to be the making of 'Nijah. He is now studying architecture.

"My real object in writing you to-night was to tell you something new and strange that has happened; but somehow I rather dread to commence, for it is all a kind of confusion to me; and I wish I could forget at least a part of it. Still there is joyful news connected with it.

"Mrs. Blossom — you haven't forgotten her of course — didn't forget us, and seemed to take a fancy to Mary and I, though she never would get to be the least confidential. We made a practice all winter of visiting her about once a week, to assure ourselves that she was kept comfortable; and the boy Neil we became greatly attached to. Mr. St. Maur had continued to send three dollars per week, though the poor woman had twice, through the carrier-boy, requested him to cease his charitable gifts; and finally she ceased to make any objections, and found the money really necessary to her existence, as her health was rapidly failing. Last Wednesday I went alone to see her, as Mary did not wish to leave David; and I found her frightfully sick, dying she told me, though it proved otherwise. Thinking she was going to die, she made me her confidant; and to come to the point at once, for I'm not much of a writer, as you know, and don't like beating about the bush, she is Miss Brechandon's lost 'little Annie,' and the former lady-love of Mr. St. Maur, who, on account of her faithlessness, became such a doubter and disbeliever in woman's succeeding in any object. Mrs. Blossom told me very little herself. Mr. St. Maur told me afterward; and I couldn't blame him so much as before for his distrust and doubts. Mr. St. Maur is a noble man, though a somewhat peculiar one. Mr. St. Maur is worthy of any woman's affections; but I have refused him. This is what I

have dreaded to write; but it is told now, and I wonder what you will think of it. Mary, when I told her of it, said she was sure I was wrong; that I would come to know my own heart some time, as Aurora Lee did; but, unlike Romney, Mr. St. Maur never would come back to me. He was a man too determined, too unyielding.

"Some time, she says, I shall come to talk as Aurora did to Romney; but it will be all to myself; there will be no Romney by to hear, while I exclaim,—

> 'But I who saw the human nature broad,
> At both sides, comprehending, too, the soul's
> And all the high necessities of art,
> Betrayed the thing I saw, and wronged my own life
> For which I pleaded. Passioned to exalt
> The artist's instinct in me at the cost
> Of putting down the woman's, I forgot
> No perfect artist is developed here
> From any imperfect woman.
> . . . Art is much, but love is more.
> O art, my art, thou'rt much; but love is more!
> Art symbolizes heaven; but love is God,
> And makes heaven.'

I have repeated these words a great many times to myself; but they fail to affect me much. I have not come to it yet, if ever I shall; and until I see that I have erred, I cannot retract; and if some time I do see it when it is too late, why, I must bear it, that is all. Mr. St. Maur said he loved me, had loved me, and would love me always, and I am sure he thought I would yield, as he said all women would. You remember how satisfied he was a year ago that we would give up all hopes of greatness for a dream of love; judging all women by 'little Annie.' I thought of it, and I could not accept him. 'Art is much, but love is more,' says Aurora Lee; but the

great Apostle says, 'He who marries does well, but he who lives single does better;' and I work for *much*, and when that is attained, I shall undoubtedly wish for more, which is the way of the world. Mr. St. Maur loved 'little Annie' once, how deeply we can guess from the intensity of his nature. Mr. St. Maur has a master mind and much wealth. He desired 'little Annie' to be something more than an ordinary woman; and so, through his means and on his account, she entered one of the best schools in New York city, so called; but we should say it was one of the most miserable, for the course of instruction is based upon fashion and frivolity. Mr. St. Maur being a man, and a young one then, did not understand this, and therefore did not see that he had done something toward making 'little Annie' faithless. She had been there a year at Mr. St. Maur's expense, and then she became bewitched with a foppish young man, with little brain and little heart, and ran away with him, leaving school-days and all her bright prospects behind her; and Mr. St. Maur to grow hard and suspicious.

"And then there is 'little Annie's' story, which is a long one, but so very common you can guess it. A few happy months, then long tedious days of doubt and repentance, then desertion, and then her struggles with poverty, with a poor crippled child to support, and her determination to die rather than go back to her aunt, Miss Brechandon, and at last the overcoming of her pride for the sake of her child. The circumstances were singular and strange that brought about this recognition of persons and things, though it all sprang from Mary's advertisement, and the advertisement sprang from Mr. St. Maur's advice. But I can't stop to make comments; you will think all these things

without suggestion; especially you will think how Mr. St. Maur has been assisting her all winter without knowing it; and she has been taking his money.

"Miss Brechandon melted down entirely when she saw the poor woman and the child, and she has taken them home to her little room to care for them, and Mrs. Blossom is much better. What a strange world this is! Mr. St. Maur told me the story himself, and then asked me to marry him. I was more than surprised; and it seems almost wicked that such a generous, noble man should be twice so disappointed; but I have something to do besides getting married. I wouldn't so disappoint Mr. Worth, who has done and is doing so much for me. Perhaps if he had not made me so independent, I might have been tempted — but no, I could not so forget myself; I could not leave you, Hannah, for it is 'you and I,' you know. I remember how wretched I was when Mary left us; and I'll stick by you, and if life is spared us, our plans shall be carried into execution.

"I dream of Italy, when you and I shall visit it, and I only know that 'art is much.'

"Write me soon, for I shall be anxious to receive a reply to this letter. I think of home often, and in this case of mine, 'absence makes the heart grow fonder;' and with much love (such love as will not interfere with art, unless it advances it) to all in the home-nest, I am your loving sister, KATE."

And here is Hannah's reply: —

"KATE, DEAR KATE, — Some hunger for love and find it not, while some find it and cast it from them. Not much is even in this world. Some have over-

much, and some have over-little. Some fling from them with indifference or perhaps scorn what others would give the world to possess. Some, after hard labor and earnest desires, fail, while others almost before they know it are successful; but then —

'A thousand failures, what are these in the sight
Of the One All-Perfect, who, whether man fails in his work, or succeeds,
Builds surely, solemnly up from our broken days and deeds
The infinite purpose of time!'

"It is past midnight now, and so very, very still. I have sat here alone since sunset, all alone with your letter, to read over and over. Had I retired, I could not have slept; and so I sat here and thought of many things. I thought of the difference in you and me, especially how you were always receiving and flinging away, while I was always giving, but never receiving, or, that is, not often. I thought of the past too, not so much of the near past as of the past long gone; and I thought perhaps my heart was buried there, or tried to think so. You refused Mr. St. Maur. He loved you, loved you, — Mr. St. Maur loved you, had loved you, and would love you always, and you refused him. How strange! everything seems strange to-night; perhaps it is because I have sat here since sunset, and it is now past midnight. Perhaps I am wearied; but everything seems strange, though it may be it is all because you have refused Mr. St. Maur, and he will always love you. I wonder if he is asleep now, or if those beautiful blue eyes of his are looking at the moon. I never saw the moon so white and coldly beautiful before, and there is such a shiver in the wind.

"The moonbeams fall directly across my heap of manuscript, finished the last word of it to-day, and

lying here as still and voiceless as though my hopes now were not all centred in it and in that which will follow it. I cannot tell what will become of it, or how worthy it is; but I know it never seemed half so dear to me before as it does to-night. It is strange how little people understand their hearts until they are crushed or broken; everything is strange to-night. The clock is striking, — one, two. I thought it past midnight, but not two hours. Mr. St. Maur was very kind to me that week he stayed at the village; he didn't scowl or seem distrustful. That week has ever seemed like a beautiful star in my life's sky; but now the star is set. I wonder if it was fate that caused me to write a letter to him concerning the advertisement more than two years ago. It was a little thing to do, but I regret now that I did it; and I wonder, after all, if I shall be the *model* old maid. It is strange that persons should be born to love, and then find they are not loved in return. I wonder what becomes of the love in such cases. Longfellow says, —

'Talk not of wasted affection: affection never was wasted;
If it enrich not the heart of another, its waters returning
Back to their springs, like the rain, shall fill them full of refreshment.
That which the fountain sends forth, returns again to the fountain.'

"But then Longfellow isn't divine, and might easily make a mistake, and to-night you know everything seems strange, and it's doubtful whether I think with reason. We are so unlike, Kate; while you dream of art, I dream of love; but I shall dream of it no longer, only of that love of which I am sure, and which will never fail me. Twice. That is enough; now I will take life as it is; and though 'love is more,' yet 'art is much.' I might have given up art for love. You gave up love for art. That is the difference between us; only you have a choice, and I have not.

"Mary is happy. I am glad of that. I am glad she married, though I wept over it once.

"Now the moonbeams have crept on the page where I am writing, but they never tell tales. Let them read; I am not afraid of them. I might have known Mr. St. Maur loved you, only I was so blind; and then he was so very kind to me. I am more than twenty-five now, and I am glad, and shall be glad when thirty comes; then I shall have learned so well how to be calm, and placid, and happy. This manuscript, lying in the moonlight, contains inspiration drawn from what I have lost; that is some gain, and Mr. St. Maur and I are friends.

"Wedding-bells will ring to-morrow; for Maurice Pike and Sally — both of whom have lately joined the church — will be married.

"Most people marry some time, as Mary says; but I never shall. Perhaps I ought not to send you this letter written while I am in so strange a mood; but it isn't like me never to express my feelings, while I have you to whom to express them. I'm not much like heroines in books, not like my own. I am not a fit subject for a heroine: I have known that ever since I thought of it. But you are: I have known that too ever since I thought of it. We are different, but yet we agree so well that it is happiness to be together.

"I will try and write a much better and a much livelier letter next time, but I think the writing of this has done me good. The moonbeams seem softer and pleasanter, and the moon not so cold and white. No one knows I am writing, but you know how much love there is here for you. I think I can sleep now, and in the morning I shall feel better. It would be a blessing if I could see Mr. Worth now. He is such a com-

forter. My manuscript goes to him to-morrow, and Dill is to spend the day with me. She is very happy and very wise. Dill is almost getting strong-minded.

"I shall write Mary soon, and tell her how delighted I am with her success, and yours,—Kate, Kate, you know how I feel, and everything seems so strange to-night that I can write no more. Good-night.

"HANNAH.

"P. S. I have been reading a little poem that I wrote six or seven years ago, and I slip it in with this letter for you to read. It seems so suggestive. Please let Mary read it too.

WEDDING-DAYS.

"To wed a man whom you would die to save,
To whom you'd cling through fortune's darkest frown,
Worthy, and giving you the love you crave,
Raising where poverty has cast you down,
Is happiness above which none can find,
And equal to all earthly bliss combined.

"Few find this sacred joy; for few can know
The depths of all-absorbing, perfect love;
And from this world unloved, unwed, they go
To find their bliss in the great world above:
Their wedding-bells ring on the other shore,
Their wedding-songs the angels warble o'er.

"Hearts break, and still live on in bosoms sore;
And wedding-days forever disappear:
They worshipped once, but they can love no more,
And lover's words they never more can hear.
This is a woe which singly will outlast
A thousand sorrows which the world o'ercast."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### AFTER SEVEN YEARS.

THREE women sat side by side on the ledge above the ferns in the old orchard. Their hands were clasped, and they were looking off over the landscape which was decked all over with spring sunshine.

"This is so like the time when we sat here long ago, — it seems an age, — the day before we started for New York for the first time. Would you like that time brought back to us, girlies?" said Mary, pressing warmly the hands she held.

"Not if we were to live over the intervening years as we have lived them," replied Hannah, thoughtfully.

"I rejoice that those days are over," said Kate, with a long sigh; "but I am not sorry for all the labor I have performed, and all the good I have done, which seems like very little as I look back."

"The world grows more beautiful to me every day, probably because heaven seems nearer," said Mary.

Ah! heaven indeed seemed near and more tangible to Mary, for there had dwelt within its walls of jasper and gates of pearl, three years that very autumn, David De Witt, or "Davie, my husband," as she called him. Her married life had been short, but very satisfactory and sweet; for she had been a comfort and a blessing to the one she loved, and had made the last

years of his life peaceful and even happy, and had at last come to be his strength and his support. Untiringly she had watched by his bedside; and at last, when he had fallen asleep in her arms, to awaken on the "other side," she had even then remembered to thank God for all he had been to her, and for all she had done for him; and in the years that followed she never once ceased to be grateful that he had been her husband, and she his faithful wife. He had left her nothing but the memory of his love and kindness, his class of pupils, and his place at the church organ. These she had accepted as precious and valuable legacies, and undoubtedly no amount of money would have been worth to her what these were.

The flowers had bloomed over his grave three years in Greenwood, and Mary sat with her sisters, as of old, — yet not as of old, — above the cool, sweet ferns.

"Heaven is nearer to us all, I hope," said Hannah, after a moment's silence, in which they had all been thinking of Mary's loss; and they all drew nearer together, while over Kate's mind there flashed for one little instant the selfish thought that Mary once more was theirs, as in the dear old time.

The seven years had brought mostly gain to Hannah and Kate, though there had been not a few disappointments and troubles. In art they had succeeded far beyond their expectations; but the wise know that untiring labor, accompanied by talent and the noblest and purest desires, is as sure to be rewarded by success, as the morning is sure to dawn after the night has gone; but then these women, Hannah and Kate, even with all their wisdom, would persist in believing that their success came through the timely assistance, encouragement, and advice of Mr. Worth, who had not forsaken

them through all their risings and fallings, and whose friendship had ever been a light in their path. It is true that neither as yet had risen to great popularity; and they had not expected it; but they had attained to positions which were honorable and pecuniarily beneficial.

In a New England city noted for its refinement, elegance, and beauty, was a charming little studio, outside of which, over the street, the passers-by read the words in black and gold, "Kate Windsor, Artist;" and inside, the walls were decorated with sketches, portraits, and a number of beautiful designs. Here was the easel with a bunch of pond lilies half finished upon it, and near by an easy-chair where the young artist had often sat and dreamed, and designed beautiful pictures. It was a cozy little room, but deserted now, for the smiling young artist, its chief attraction, with her great black eyes full of artistic light, and the jaunty velvet cap and tassel, was gone, and we have already seen her at home in the old orchard. For three years she had worked in this little studio, and among those who loved and appreciated art in the town she was well known and respected. She had come to be patronized, too, by those great in rank and wealth; and many a portrait and picture in their elegant parlors boasted her as their author. Money had come to her faster than she had dreamed; but she had carefully laid it by for an object in the future, and what that object was we soon shall see.

Not far from this studio, in the same town, Hannah had worked for more than a year as assistant editor, and for a few months as editor-in-chief, of a fine literary journal.

During that time she had thought much, written

much, and had drawn around her a circle of wealthy friends, some of the noted authors of the day. Like a nightmare seemed her sensational writing, and one of her chief aims in life was to encourage those who wrote at all to write that which was elevating and not degrading; to imitate the high-toned literature, and shrink from all other as they would from imminent peril. She remembered how Mr. Worth had saved her; how he had not condemned and scorned her writings like many others, and then passed her by without offering her any assistance; but when he pointed out her mistake and error, he lifted her up into a higher path, and helped her to walk there safely and successfully. She tried to imitate his example, and many a young author thanked her for her assistance.

Her first book had been received by the public with some favor and appreciation, her second had given her some popularity, and her third, which was now but just commenced, she hoped would exceed all else she had ever written. She too, as well as Kate, had been able to lay by a sum of money for a darling object which she had cherished for years.

Mary, who had now come back into the group again, had gained even more popularity than her sisters. Possessing tact, as Kate had asserted in her letter, she knew how to please the public ear, and many of the songs which she had composed were of a lively and often comical nature; besides, she had continued to play the organ for a fair salary, though somewhat inferior to her husband's, — she being a woman, — and she kept also a select class of pupils, from which she received a fair income; and so she, like her sisters, had laid by a sum of money which was now soon to be made use of. And now they had all left their business for

a season, — Hannah her editorial sanctum, Kate her studio, and Mary her class and organ, — to spend a few days at the dear old homestead, and then take a trip across the ocean to the Old World. It was the day before their departure that they sat above the ferns in the old orchard, and not half so great and perilous seemed their journey in prospect as had that journey years ago only to the city of New York. They left their business behind them, yet they were to carry with them their pens and brushes, which they intended should pay, if not all, yet many of their expenses.

Wasn't this an attainment of some greatness ? We remember them long ago, three unsophisticated young girls, sitting in the long green orchard and dreaming out their future, and half trembling at the thought of their first plunge as it were into the cold world. Now we see three women sitting in the same beloved nook, with hands clasped, dreaming again of their future, and of their near visit to the Old World, — three women with thoughtful eyes and firm lips, with softened voices, and hands that have learned what it is to labor, and hearts what it is to wait ; three women, mature and womanly, grown strong with the responsibilities of life which they did not shrink from taking upon themselves, and far happier, wiser, and better for their labor and self-dependence, especially as they had escaped that slavery in which so many women are held as with a rod of iron, — the slavery of fashion, of dress, and of popular opinion, a bondage out of which women must rise if ever they place their feet on firm footing, and rise into active and worthy womanhood.

A woman cannot serve two masters, for either she will love the one and hate the other, or she will hold to the one and despise the other. With her, as with a

man, dress must become a secondary object, and the thousand frivolities of fashionable life, which are only a waste of time and talent, must be thrown aside and forgotten, before womanhood attains its beauty and perfection, for *no one* can serve two masters.

These three sisters had chosen the better part, and they felt it, this soft spring day, as they sat side by side in the shadow of the unpretentious home which had sheltered and blessed them.

"Let us talk," said Mary; for they had sat for some time silent, and Mary spoke in something of her cheery girlish tone. "Don't you suppose, girls, that Davie knows all about our going to Europe, and don't you suppose he is glad and will be with us? I never think of him as dead. I can't. Before he went, when I used to hear Mr. Worth talk of his wife as near him, with him just as if she were living, I used to lie awake sometimes and wonder about it; but I never wonder now, and I can appreciate just how he used to feel, and why he was so resigned and peaceful. It is all because he does not think of his wife as dead, but expects to meet her again, and enjoy her society even better than when on earth. And I feel that way too, though sometimes I long to see Davie so much that it makes me weep that it cannot be yet, but generally I am hopeful and happy."

"Sweet Mary, you are a jewel," said Hannah. "Souls must be lifted high up to feel thus, and how beautiful it is to climb nearer and nearer heaven!"

"Can it be possible," said Kate, with a little start, for she had been deeply engaged in thought, "can it be possible, girlies, that we are going to Europe, we three, on our own responsibilities too? That is a sublime idea, isn't it? Women *can* do something if they try. Haven't we proved it?"

"Perhaps we had better wait till we return from across the water, before we consider the matter settled," said Hannah.

"We will prove that women can attain to a position where they may furnish funds — all earned by their own hands — for such a trip," said Mary a little proudly.

"And isn't that satisfactory?" said Kate, her eyes brightening.

"It is delightful," said Hannah. "It does one good just to think of it; but then where might we have been now, if that one good man, Mr. Worth, had not done so much for us?"

"In positions inferior to those we now occupy, I am sure," returned Kate.

"And what should I have been, but for Davie?" asked Mary, with a tenderness in her voice.

"Well," said Kate, "our assistance has been so pleasant, so enjoyable, and so blessed, I would not have missed it out of our lives, even if we could have accomplished what we have without it."

"I wish there were more men so ready to encourage and assist young girls who are striving to be independent and accomplish some noble object," said Hannah; there was silence a moment.

"Kate," said Mary, who generally broke the silence, "what do you think now of art and love?"

Kate's face grew rosy to her temples.

"Well," she replied, after a moment's hesitation, "I think I take a sensible view of the subject. I think they should go together in my case. Neither, I suppose, is complete without the other; but with my art, and the true and beautiful friendships I have formed, I think I can live happily without a husband. Yet" —

"Yet what?"

"I might not — I mean that I am probably not so averse to marriage as I was once; because I believe now, seeing as I do more clearly, that it should not interfere with progress."

They heard just then the murmur of voices; and looking in the direction of the sound, they saw a man and woman walking arm in arm through the long orchard. They were busily talking, and had not noticed the women above the ferns. It was a pleasant sight, — a tall, strong man, with an earnest, honest face, and a gentle woman walking by his side, her face radiant with love and joy. It is doubtful if at the first glance the reader would recognize in the tall man the once awkward and bashful 'Nijah; but Dill, who had been his wife almost a year, had the same sweet, spiritual face, only more beautiful for the love in her heart. The three women, however, who were quietly watching them, recognized them at once.

"What a mistake it would have been," whispered Kate, "if I had married 'Nijah instead of Dill! 'Nijah is much happier and more content than he would have been with me; and Dill would have been miserable without him. 'All things work together for good to those who love God.'"

Slowly the happy couple advanced, but did not look toward the sisters.

"Dill!" Hannah called; and then they espied them, smiled, waved their hands, and advanced towards them.

"We were just going over to see you," said Dill. "How comfortable you look up there on the ledge! Let us climb up there, 'Nijah. It is a fitting place, you know," she added in a mysterious tone.

"This is not the first time I have climbed towards them," said 'Nijah, assisting his wife up the ledge. "We must take heed lest we fall. Some people, you know, can climb higher than others, with no injury, but rather benefit to themselves; and others, attempting to reach the same height, fall, and either kill themselves outright, or make cripples of themselves for life."

"We will assist you," said Hannah, giving Dill her hand. "It is often the lack of assistance that causes people to fall or forbids them to rise."

"I am aware of that," answered 'Nijah, sitting with Dill at the sisters' feet; "and I am proud of having been assisted by women. I wouldn't have been the man I am, but for you, girls. There was no encouragement at home, you know, of that kind I needed, and none in the whole neighborhood, but with you. I feel quite sure that I should now be only a plodding farmer on a rocky farm, if you had not 'ran away to seek your fortune.'"

"Then we have done good to some one besides ourselves by our independent notions," said Kate, laughing.

"In more ways than one," returned Dill, pressing Hannah's hand. "I wouldn't give up the beautiful ideas of religion which I have learned from you for all the world; for if all else fail, they will comfort me."

'Nijah turned and looked admiringly and affectionately into the happy, earnest face of his wife.

"We both owe you much," he said, "and it has pleased us to bring each a token of our love for and gratitude to you this night, before you go away so far. Where are they, Dill?"

Dill produced a little box, and, opening it, displayed, lying in crimson cotton, three plain gold rings.

As the sisters, with moist eyes, slipped the circlets on their fingers, 'Nijah said, "In all your wanderings, let these rings remind you of our friendship, endless and" —

"As precious as gold," broke in Hannah.

"Isn't friendship beautiful?" said Mary, with a tear on her cheek.

Kate was silent, and turned the ring slowly round and round on her finger. It was the first ring she had ever worn.

"This is a beautiful experience in our lives," she said at last.

"With friendship like ours," said Hannah, "one need never get tired of life, and never need have any fears for the future."

"And 'to be worthy of true friendship is to be worthy of much,'" quoted 'Nijah from Kate's words that night, years ago, when she refused him.

There was a moment's silence.

"Ah! how forgetful I am!" exclaimed 'Nijah at last. "Here is a letter for Mary. I took it from the office to-day."

"Thank you," said Mary, looking at the letter. "It is from Miss Brechandon; and as you know her, and are interested in Mrs. Blossom and her boy, you shall hear it."

She opened it and read it aloud. An extract from it will be all my readers will care to hear.

"Annie is getting cheerful and happy, and little Neil is as near an angel as a mortal can be. If I follow him, I shall surely get to heaven without my hymn-book, and without the creed and restrictions of the church. He is teaching me the lesson that you and your sisters commenced, that the love of the heart

and the work of the hands is Christ's requirement; and I have set myself to work doing good. I'm now working among drunkards' families, and I tell you they are plenty enough. Annie is teaching a primary school. Stephen St. Maur procured the situation for her, and he is kind to us three, and I think or hope something may come of it that will make us all happy. Why not?"

"Ah, why not?" repeated Kate, moving uneasily in her seat, and curling her lip as though that were the best thing she could do.

"Why not?" said Adonijah, quite pleased with the idea.

"If he wants to marry her, after all the trouble she has given him, and after she has so deceived him, let him do it. It's his own affair," said Kate, rising abruptly.

"Mrs. Blossom has suffered enough to make her good, hasn't she?" asked 'Nijah.

"I don't know nor care how good she is," said Kate tartly. "Come, let us go to the house; the sun is down, and I'm chilly. The weather is cool, if it is spring."

They all arose and walked leisurely through the orchard, Kate ahead, with her hat in her hand, walking with unusual firmness.

'Nijah and Dill only called a moment at the farmhouse; and when the good-bys were said, and a sweet song sung, to which the father and mother listened with tears of pride, joy, and sadness commingled, the three women retired to their room, the old square chamber, as they had done so many times in the past. Immediately when they entered, Hannah sat down on one of the beds, and remained for a moment very still and silent.

"What is the matter, Hannah?" asked Mary, putting her arm around her sister's neck.

"I was thinking, dear," said Hannah, looking up with a calm, sweet smile, "I was thinking how peaceful and happy I am, and what a nice age mine is."

"It isn't the single life that makes women sour or cross, is it?" said Mary, kissing Hannah's cheek. "You would always find enough to love, and enough to do to keep your heart warm."

"I hope so," answered Hannah cheerfully.

Kate stood before the glass brushing her black hair rather roughly. "Stephen St. Maur is fickle enough," she said abruptly.

"I should think his constancy rather remarkable," said Mary. "I don't know why you call him fickle, because he is renewing his first love."

"Well, of course it makes no difference to me what he is or what he isn't," said Kate.

"I don't believe Stephen St. Maur will ever marry Mrs. Blossom," said Hannah calmly.

"You don't!" exclaimed Kate, whirling about, and then turning back again to the glass. "Pooh, it's none of our business, and we know nothing about it. I wish Mr. Worth was going with us across the ocean."

"Dear Mr. Worth! will there ever arise another man like him?" said Hannah. "If only he would go with us, but he will be in New York to see us."

"It's a long journey," said Mary with a little shiver.

Kate softened, and, leaving the glass, she went and sat down by the side of her sisters.

"But we will all be together," she said; "and the company we go with is a brilliant one. Don't let us get homesick before we start."

"The journey seems very long to father and mother. Did ever parents before have such a set of girls as we are?" said Hannah.

They had not heard their mother's gentle step, but she had heard Hannah's last remark.

"Parents never had a lovelier group of girls than mine," she said with that beautiful smile of hers.

"If we are in any way worthy," said Hannah after a little start of surprise, "we owe it to you and father, to your encouragement and your assistance in our undertakings always as far as you were able. Not many girls are blessed with parents like ours; and could any words make us happier to-night, girls, than to be called 'lovely' by mother?"

"Nothing," answered Kate; "not all the plaudits of the world."

"Nothing, nothing," half whispered Mary, drawing her mother down by her side.

"I am not half so rejoiced over the positions you have attained, which are noble and honestly earned," said their mother, "as I am over your purity, goodness, and gentleness, and your pleasant contentment, your understanding, and your capability to take care of yourselves."

"All of which we have learned of you and father through your teaching and example," said Hannah.

"And we are prouder of you to-night," said Kate, "than though you lived in a palace and wore crowns."

"Isn't it wrong to go so far off and leave you?" asked Mary.

"No," their mother replied quickly, though her lip trembled slightly. "We wish you to learn all you can, enjoy all you can, and do all the good you can. Wherever you wander, you will be under the protect-

ing care of our Heavenly Father, and the world is not so wide that it can part us in spirit and affections."

And so they talked, mother and daughters; and the angels listened, and were glad; and when the sisters lay down to rest, in a low tone Hannah repeated this stanza in reference to their parents: —

"Though other friends forsake us, you are true;
If other friends distrust us, you will trust;
If we neglect and wander far from you,
Ah! then you'll be more merciful than just.
May we be worthy of your trust and love,
And meet you in Christ's mansion up above."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE GOLD MEDAL.

"MR. ST. MAUR!"

Kate had been for a few moments pacing up and down her studio, humming softly, —

"Home again, home again,
From a foreign shore!
And O, it fills my soul with joy
To meet my friends once more," —

when, turning suddenly toward the door, she saw Stephen St. Maur standing on the threshold.

This was soon after the three sisters' return to America from their trip to Europe. They were all settled again at their work, much improved physically and mentally, and greatly advanced in public favor. The European travels of so many heroes and heroines have been written, all so similar, that I shall not attempt to write the experience of my travellers in the Old World, but introduce them again on American soil.

They had made some distinguished acquaintances, and Hannah had written some very brilliant letters, and altogether they had made a most prosperous voyage and visit, and returned to their native shore pleased with their success, and, like all wanderers, delighted to see home again.

Kate had not seen Mr. St. Maur since her return, until he stood so unexpectedly in the door of her stu-

dio, and she pronounced his name in a tone of great astonishment, and for an instant her face was pale to her lips.

Mr. St. Maur smiled; he never scowled now, but his hair had in it a few streaks of gray, and there were lines on his face.

"I have brought you the gold medal," he said, advancing, "and the present, and my appreciation of your much more than ordinary accomplishment and success."

"And your belief in woman's power to dare and to do?" asked Kate, before taking his offered hand.

"Yes, my entire belief in woman's ability, and my disbelief in the way she is generally educated," he said; and Kate gave him her hand.

"You don't desire proof," he said, pressing her hand warmly. "If you did, I would refer you to the half-dozen young artists who are developing their talents through my assistance."

"I am so glad, so glad!" exclaimed Kate, her face getting radiant. "Mr. St. Maur, I cannot tell you how glad; for I remember what such assistance has done for me, and can understand just how those young artists feel. You have done much for humanity since I saw you."

"Something, I hope."

"I am glad you acknowledge me successful."

"I could not do otherwise, especially since I have seen that last picture of yours displayed in New York, over which people are so enthusiastic."

"Are they enthusiastic?"

"Yes; it is the chief attraction of the gallery."

"I am glad. I liked it myself, but did not know if others would."

"Didn't you expect me to come with the gold medal?"

"I thought perhaps,—that is, I didn't know,—of course I supposed you had forgotten it long ago."

"I am not so forgetful as that, and I saw several years ago that the medal must be given, but I waited until I was sure." They sat down opposite each other.

"I have long thought you the bravest little woman in the world," he continued.

"But there are others as brave, only you have not seen them. There are many women struggling to rise, and it is a wonder that any succeed, crushed down as they are by public sentiment. I remember how we first started away from home without a word of encouragement outside of our own family, and how the neighborhood was shocked, that women should try to be what they longed for when it was beyond keeping house, and how everybody stared and told frightful stories, and made our way as rough as they could. And all the way through, we have been treated the same; even by you, Mr. St. Maur, until we actually attained a position that no one could gainsay. We fought against prejudice and discouragements; and even with all our bravery and determination, I am sure it would have taken years longer to lift us where we now are, but for Mr. Worth, the friend of struggling, self-dependent women, who took us by the hand as it were, and helped us scale the rugged rocks that otherwise we should have been many years in climbing. Thoughts of him are woven into every picture of mine."

"And they say you will marry him," said Mr. St. Maur, looking keenly into Kate's face.

"Who? Marry who?"

"Mr. Worth."

"Marry Mr. Worth? Why, he has a wife already. How can people say that?"

"Has a wife? I was not aware of it. Where is she?"

"In heaven."

Mr. St. Maur looked puzzled, but in an instant his face cleared. "I understand," he said, "forgive me;" and he gave her his hand.

"I forgive you and every one," said Kate. "People don't understand hearts, and marriage, you know, they anticipate in every place possible."

"Yes, I know," he said, and looked thoughtful.

"Did you believe I would marry him?"

"No; I knew you wouldn't," said he in a decisive and suggestive tone.

Kate's face flushed a trifle, and she changed the subject.

"You have not asked me about our travels in Europe?"

"No; I read Hannah's letters, and I didn't wish to trouble you; and I know, without asking you, that you greatly enjoyed the tour."

"You guessed so?"

"No. I know so from your looks and appearance."

"Thank you. You judge correctly, but you may be assured we were glad to get back to America."

"Satisfied that women may visit the Old World independently?" interrogated Mr. St. Maur with a twinkle in his eye.

"Wholly satisfied, as we are on a good many other subjects."

"Didn't the glorious paintings you saw discourage you?"

"No, indeed. I was happy in gazing upon them, and thinking what genius could do, and glad that I could do something for the art I love so well. Because I cannot be Raphael, I do not intend to be nothing. I will do what I can, for I had rather do less of something I love than more of something I dislike."

"You are very much your old self, Kate; but we cannot argue on these questions as we used to, for I have turned traitor to my old belief you know, and am getting strong-minded."

Kate laughed.

"That is encouraging," she said; "I wish the men in general, who talk so much about strong-minded women, would turn about and be strong-minded themselves. If they should, the whole matter of woman's equality and rights would be very soon satisfactorily settled."

"I am not the least doubtful about that; but if all women would display as much independence and bravery as you have, this same matter would be even sooner satisfactorily settled."

"I wish they would."

"I wish so too, and I shall do all I can to help them. Once I determined never to assist women in any way, unless to keep them from starving; but that idea was a very narrow one, and was based on a personal injury. My views have broadened since then. I might have given you assistance, how easily! but I promised myself to resist all such temptations, and I did, though it was hard sometimes; but I had tried it once and failed."

"If you had offered us assistance, we should have probably refused it."

"You did not refuse the assistance of Mr. Worth."

"No; no one could refuse Mr. Worth. It would seem a sin to do so, for he assists in such a general way. He is a philanthropist, and he says, when he wishes to render assistance, 'This is no personal favor; if you have talents, they must be brought out and cultivated, that the world may be benefited by them; and as I have the means, I feel it a duty to use them for such purposes, and you must pay me by benefiting the world.' Who could refuse such assistance as that?"

"No one *should* refuse it, and no one would who was not possessed of false modesty and pride; and I suppose all things have happened for the best."

As he said this, he looked into Kate's face, and their eyes met. A wave of crimson passed over Kate's cheeks, and her eyelids trembled a little as she glanced downward; but Mr. St. Maur was as cool and self-possessed as before.

"I suppose you will be removing to New York soon," he said, after a moment's silence.

"I may move there some time," said Kate, looking up with clear, calm eyes; "but I like this beautiful town, and I fancy the people rather like me; and I am so happy here that I almost fear to change my situation."

"What are you painting now?"

"A piece for Mr. Worth;" and, going to her easel, Kate raised the cloth, and displayed a beautiful painting.

After admiring it and listening to the artist's explanations, he said, —

"If only I had assisted you what might I now expect?"

"Probably a painting."

"I have several of yours already, but I bought

them all. It isn't like receiving one as a gift. But it is time the medal was presented to you; shall I make a formal presentation speech?"

"It would be very entertaining," said Kate, laughing and folding her hands together.

"Speech-making is hardly my forte, and I should be especially awkward in this case. I ought to have brought you a laurel bough. This is yours, and this is Hannah's. I didn't promise Mary any, though she has earned one. And now, in presenting you with this, I do not wish you to understand that I believe you can rise no higher, but rather that you will continue to rise for years."

"I thank you, Mr. St. Maur," said Kate, as she bowed gracefully and received the medal. "I thank you especially for your confidence in my position and my future advancement, for I remember when you felt otherwise."

"And I remember when you proved to me that marriage was not your object," said Mr. St. Maur, as coolly as though he were talking on a less delicate subject.

Kate was standing near a bracket which held a vase of flowers. The words of Mr. St. Maur embarrassed her; she raised her hand suddenly, and in an instant the vase was in pieces on the carpet, she hardly knew how. The flowers fell out, and the fragrance of the tuberoses perfumed the room.

"'You may break, you may scatter the vase, if you will,
The scent of the roses will hang round it still,'"

quoted Mr. St. Maur, as he stooped and gathered up the fragments and the flowers.

"I have heard there is no great loss without some small gain; and I believe there is no great gain with-

out some small loss," said Kate with composure. "Just as I received this medal, I lost this beautiful vase."

"But the flowers remain," said Mr. St. Maur, and then he was thoughtfully silent a moment.

"Kate," he said at last.

"Well, Mr. St. Maur!"

"Don't you guess what is my chief object here to-day?"

"I believe you told me, it was to bring the medal."

"But don't you guess something more?"

"I believe you said a present besides," answered Kate, frankly.

"But don't you guess more than that?"

"No, sir, not yet."

"Think a moment, and perhaps you may guess right."

"I'm not good at guessing," said Kate, a little impatiently, thinking of Mrs. Blossom.

"But don't you remember that I told you a few years ago that I loved you, had loved you, and would love you always? and can't you guess that I have waited long enough, and have come to hear you promise to be my wife?"

Kate's eyes flashed. What did the man mean? That she was ready to marry him, and would be glad of the opportunity to do so? What conceit! She had lived without marriage so long, and she could live longer. He was bold enough. After she had once refused him, to come expecting to be accepted! Perhaps he thought *old-maidism* had made her anxious to change her name; but she wasn't afraid to live all her life without marrying. No amount of time or sneers would make her ashamed of the Miss before her

name. She thought all this in an instant; and she said, drawing back a little toward the wall, —

"I don't propose to guess any such thing, Mr. St. Maur. I am very well provided for; and why should I change my mind?"

"Because you have earned the gold medal," he replied; "and you love me, Kate."

"You seem to have power to divine my feelings," she said ironically.

"And haven't I divined them rightly?"

"I do not intend to marry. I am wedded to my art," said Kate; but her voice trembled slightly.

"O Kate!" Mr. St. Maur's eyes were filled with tenderness, love, and pleading; and his voice was full of disappointment and sorrow.

"O Kate!" he repeated again, and then he turned away, and, taking his hat, walked to the door. He did not once look behind him; and Kate stood like a statue, with her hands clasped, her eyes gleaming, and her face very white and rigid. He opened the door, and stood on the threshold. Kate's lips moved, but she made no noise. He had passed over the threshold, and was going. Kate wrung her hands; and when she saw he was really passing away from the sound of her voice forever, she sprang forward and called, —

"Mr. St. Maur, come back. I love you, have loved you, and will love you always."

He turned. His face was radiant with joy. He passed into the studio, and proud, self-reliant Kate fell against his bosom; and there was that lover's blissful silence, when all the world seems like an Eden.

"I have waited for you all these years," said Mr. St. Maur, "for I knew you would be mine at last, when you accomplished what you desired, and proved

that women could succeed if only they were persevering. I read you like a book, Kate. I knew you would love no one but me; and I meant to be worthy of you before I asked your hand again. I have tried to rise higher, and now I hope we may grow better side by side; and for marriage you shall not give up art."

"I would not." Kate said this smilingly, and Mr. St. Maur smiled back.

"You need not," he said, "if you will only remove to New York."

"That I shall not object to."

"I shall have a very independent wife," said Mr. St. Maur proudly, "and that is what I like. We will cling to each other, and not imitate exactly the oak and the vine."

Kate clung to him closely, and whispered,

"'Beloved, let us love so well,
Our work shall still be better for our love,
And still our love be sweeter for our work,
And both commended for the sake of each
By all true lovers and true workers born.'"

They sat down side by side, hand clasping hand just in front of Kate's easel, where she had worked and worshipped art. All around on the walls hung pictures painted by her hand, and her brushes lay near by, and her paints where she had lately been at work. Both looked around them, and thought of what Kate had accomplished, and Kate said, —

"How blessed I am! both love and art are mine."

"And they are mine also, since you are mine; and how much sublimity and beauty there is in their combination! Yes, beloved, we will love and work together, and each shall be better for the other. But the present, — have you forgotten that I promised you a

present with the medal?" and almost before Kate knew it, a diamond ring was on her finger. She looked at it; and just as she was about to raise it to her lips, a sunbeam struck the diamond, and it dazzled her eyes with its exceeding brilliancy.

"How beautiful!" she exclaimed, and pressed it to her lips.

"Our hearts are like the diamond," said Mr. St. Maur; "the sunlight of love can make them brilliant with every beautiful feeling which they contain."

"I am glad," said Kate, looking frankly into Mr. St. Maur's face, "I am glad we met to-day here in my studio."

"Yes, I am glad, and I meant it should be so. I knew love would be sweeter to you here, and these beautiful pictures smile upon us a benediction."

"How much better we can understand and enjoy love when we understand and enjoy other noble things! But I have not asked about Mrs. Blossom. I heard" —

"That I was to marry her," broke in Mr. St. Maur. "That dream faded away long, long ago; and nothing could have more effectually cured me of all sentimental feelings concerning her than my acquaintance with her since her elopement with that heartless dandy. She is good, and will undoubtedly go to heaven; but mere goodness would not satisfy me in a wife, for I desire my wife to possess, besides, the individual strength and independence of my Kate; and then we can walk hand in hand, and be companions and friends, as we will, my darling."

"It will be sweeter than working alone," said Kate, thinking how much art would lose now separated from love.

"Do you regret, Kate, that you refused me once?" asked Mr. St. Maur.

"O no, I am very glad. Do you regret it?"

"No, my artist, I am glad you were so determined and brave, and I am sure we are more fitted for each other now."

"If I had accepted you then," said Kate, "I should never have felt quite satisfied, but now"—she finished the sentence with her eyes, which are sometimes more expressive than words. "What will the little widow say?" she asked after a moment.

"You have risen so far above her," returned Mr. St. Maur, "that she cannot comprehend your greatness; but she is too fashionable not to admire you."

Kate laughed.

"We used sometimes to be tempted by fine clothes and fashionable parades, my sisters and I; and though we had somewhat of a task to resist and rise above such temptations, we feel well paid for all our trials and labors, for we have taught our hearts to feel free, and liberty is sweet."

"And it is worth years of waiting to possess the heart and hand of a woman who has gained her freedom, and proved herself capable of standing alone. The love and trust of such a woman, my Kate, will strew a man's path with jewels, and draw heaven so near him that there will be no death. O artist, O beloved, this moment is so sweet, the years we waited are as naught in comparison. Come nearer, closer. O Heaven, how Thou dost reward those who work for Thee!"

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### AT HOME.

The wind howled dismally around the old farm-house, and the sleet was driven furiously against the windows; but they only heightened the beauty of the picture within the warm, cozy sitting-room, where the fire blazed brightly, and everything had about it an air of comfort.

Sitting closely together on the old sofa were Hannah, Kate, and Mary, talking together in subdued and pleasant voices. They sat in the shadow, but now and then an added light in the fire scattered the dimness, and made their faces glow with health and contentment. All the old affection for and interest in each other were visible in the tender expression of their eyes, the clasping of each other's hands, and the confiding tones of their voices.

Nearer the warm hearth-stone sat their father and mother, with hair a trifle whiter than of old, and wrinkles a little deeper in their pleasant faces, but cheery and bright, and talking busily with one whom we have never before met at the old farm-house, — Kate's husband, Mr. St. Maur.

The three sitting in a group so cozily together, often looked toward the old sofa where the three women, who seemed as girls again, appeared so deeply engaged in their own conversation.

"I think we went to Europe rather precipitately," Hannah was saying; "if we had waited until now, we might have enjoyed the tour better, as our means are more extensive; but going as we did with limited means, and on our own responsibility, no doubt, greatly benefited us, and I do not regret that we did not wait."

"I do not regret it, because I should not have been satisfied without it. I had dreamed of it so long, and determined to devote my first earned money to it, that I could not have given it up to the uncertain future," said Kate.

"I am even thankful that we went as we did, when we were all in all to each other," said Mary; "besides, I needed the change, and it strengthened me wonderfully in mind and body."

"It was best for us all, undoubtedly. Some of the conceit was taken out of us by the means, for I suppose we were more or less conceited, and are even now," said Hannah.

"To think of one's self more highly than one ought to think is a very common error, and one that most people fall into," observed Kate. "It is a hard and lengthy task to overcome all the faults in one's nature."

"Still it is a most enjoyable one; and a gradual improvement gives one great satisfaction," said Hannah. "One has to learn so much patience and endurance. Kate's marriage quelled my ambition, and made me aimless for a time; but I knew it was wrong and foolish, and fought against the influence. Mary was by to help me, and I began at last to fear that something would take her away from me, and then I had this fear to struggle against, and faith and trust to cultivate;

and now I hope I am more resigned to my fate, whatever it may be, and I know there is a very sweet peace in my heart."

"I know there is too," said Mary, dropping her head on Hannah's shoulder.

"There is peace all around us," said Kate; "see how calm and placid are the faces of father and mother. I think we have done nothing to dishonor them, girls."

"And look at your husband's face, Kate; how much it has changed since we saw it first! The eyes, how clear and soft they are! and how the lines about his mouth are changed from hardness and distrust to tenderness and trustfulness! I like to look at him, and think of it."

"So do I," said Kate, looking thoughtfully into her husband's face, and thinking besides of all they were to each other, and how happy and blessed their married life had thus far proved to be.

Mary pressed silently to her heart the golden locket in her bosom, and felt a pang that the dear face of her husband, so early vanished from her vision, she could see only within the golden case. And a tear dropped from her eye for the separation which seemed long, but she smiled presently.

"There is always something to comfort us," she said. "If we lose one joy, we find another. Out of the ashes of one hope springs another hope, and perhaps a brighter one."

"And added years bring added knowledge and peace," said Hannah, "and take us nearer to our loved ones on the other shore. Employment and a clear conscience ought to be a passport to contentment; and if we miss of some of the bright joys of life, they will all be made up to us in eternity."

"I shall never forget Davie's words long ago, before we were much more than strangers to each other. 'What time forbids, eternity will give,' he said, and asked me if I believed it. I told him then I did not know; now I haven't a doubt of it," said Mary. "Hannah's new book is a great comfort, isn't it, Kate?"

"Yes, in more ways than one," returned Kate. "I have read it so much that I almost know it by heart, and I never fail to think what a pecuniary benefit it has been to Hannah. You should see the copy that Miss Brechandon has. I am afraid she reads it more than she does her Bible; and Dill seems to have the same infatuation."

"And yet I wrote it without expecting much profit," said Hannah, "but it was a great source of enjoyment."

"Because you threw your soul into it. I am glad you are well out of the editor's chair, and are at liberty to write when, and how, and where you please. I tell you, Hannah, a little popularity isn't to be despised," said Kate.

"It surely takes a good many thorns out of one's way, if one views it correctly, and takes advantage of it," said Hannah. "Of course, fame alone will not bring happiness, and neither will riches; but if they are used to benefit others, and not abused and misused by selfishness, they may be sources of pleasure, satisfaction, and enjoyment. Popularity in itself is not worth striving for, but when it comes to us through excellence, perseverance, and earnest endeavor after the truth, and the good of humanity, it is a jewel, and we have a right to enjoy the benefits of it, but always humbly and unselfishly."

"That is the way I try to enjoy the little popularity I have gained," said Kate. "I am thankful for it, because it saves me anxiety and trouble. It is merely making friends of the public, I suppose, and that, you know, is a very influential friendship; and we learned years ago what an influential friend could do."

"Well," said Mary, "I have no fault to find; and though I get a little tired sometimes of teaching, still I never see the moment when I feel really ready to give up my class, though I do not wish to increase it. I used to think that when I became pecuniarily able, I would teach those who desired to study music, and were not able to pay for their lessons, without charge, but I have only one such scholar, and she is very brilliant. I find itto be a wiser plan to send such scholars that I happen to find to young teachers and pay their bills. This helps both the teacher and pupil, and with one scholar from a wealthy family I can pay for three."

"That is much wiser," said Kate; "I have adopted much the same plan."

"But Kate will persist in having one pupil," broke in Mr. St. Maur, moving nearer the sofa.

"Yes, but she is very talented and very agreeable, and I think helps rather than hinders," said Kate.

"I perceive," observed Hannah, "that you and Mary are like all the rest. You assist the talented and brilliant, and leave such ignorant girls as we were once, to get along as they can. Genius will assert itself anywhere, but talent often needs a great deal of encouragement and help."

"Very true," said Kate, "and I acknowledge the reproof to be just; yet there is one thing so entirely necessary with mere talent that it is not much use in assisting any one who does not possess it."

"What is it?" asked Mary.

"Indomitable perseverance. If a person isn't willing to work hard, to give up personal comforts, not to stop at obstacles, to brave public and private censure, and determined to succeed, they will be almost sure to fall by the way, and then grumble at the cruelty of fate."

"I have learned long ago," said Mr. St. Maur, "that talent alone is little better than no talent at all, and there is no use in helping those who will not help themselves. I do not know but it injures more than it benefits them."

"You are determined not to forget your experience," said Hannah, "but we must remember that there is a wrong way and a right way to render assistance, and also that circumstances alter cases. We must not be too severe on the weak natures, but feel that a little help may strengthen them a trifle at least."

"Hannah is right," said their father. "No one is strong enough but that he may be overcome, and we must have charity for all. It is a great joy to me that my daughters do not forget others, now they are comfortable and happy themselves, and I hope they will always be as thoughtful as now, and as desirous of sharing their gain with others; but there is such a thing as aristocratic benevolence, and true generosity is often merged into it."

"We should never rise so high," said their mother, "that our hands cannot reach the low and the humble to draw them toward us; for as soon as we do that, we shall fall."

"Daughters ought to be good with such teaching," said Mr. St. Maur. "My instructions were very different."

"I told you," said Kate, roguishly, "that I didn't deserve all the credit you gave me, and that you deserved much more praise than I."

"Which is simply my partial wife's opinion," said Mr. St. Maur.

"If father and mother would only go back with us to New York," said Mary, "I am sure we should be kept from many of these polished temptations."

"You have done well thus far," said their mother, "and we trusted you when there was more danger than now; but we shall not be likely to refuse your invitation to go to the city for a visit, and see how nobly our daughters can earn their own living, and how independently they can live according to their income."

"And see my new piano," said Mary, "and my music in the windows of the great music stores."

"And my charming studio, and our delightful home," said Kate.

"And my library, and elegant desk, where I work with so much pleasure," said Hannah.

"There is no chance for escape," said Mr. St. Maur.

The door opened, and a boy put a letter in Hannah's hand; but she only glanced at the writing, blushed, and slipped the letter into her pocket.

"Hannah needs a great amount of watching," said Kate with mock seriousness, "or she will be sure not to be the 'model old maid,' after all."

"I have thought so for some time," said Mr. St. Maur, "and that letter so hastily slipped into her pocket more than ever arouses my suspicions."

"You don't know anything about it," said Mary, "and so you may keep quiet, and Hannah shall have

all the letters she likes, and slip them all into her pocket if she chooses."

"So she shall," said Kate laughing; and the fire grew brighter, and displayed the faces of that loving group shining with peace.

THE END.

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